



The Ethics of Revenge
and the Meanings of
the *Odyssey*

ALEXANDER C. LONEY

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OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS

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Published in the United States of America by Oxford University Press
198 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10016, United States of America.

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CIP data is on file at the Library of Congress
ISBN 978-0-19-090967-3

1 3 5 7 9 8 6 4 2

Printed by Sheridan Books, Inc., United States of America

To Emily

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Preface

I BENEFITED FROM the careful and judicious help of many in bringing this book to its *telos*. From its first conception to publication, this book has taken nearly as long to complete as Odysseus' journey home. Along the way, I have benefited from the advice and criticism of so many that I am sure to forget to name some of them here. Please forgive the oversight. Before listing all those who are to be thanked, I must say, as is customary, that none can be blamed for any shortcomings or errors in the book.

In the very early stages of this project's development, José González was a tireless sounding board, patiently listening to me try out various disconnected threads of different ideas. Later, as I gave to him in quick succession lengthy drafts of chapters, he would promptly turn each of them around with detailed, careful comments. I would also like to thank the incisive, critical reading that early versions of the project received by Peter Burian, Carla Antonaccio, and William Johnson. While at Duke University, my initial work was supported by the Franklin Humanities Institute as well as the Kenan Institute for Ethics. Various parts of this project have had other patient readers and auditors in its earlier stages: Diskin Clay, Casey Dué, Douglas Olson, Paul Griffiths, Jenny Strauss Clay, Ruth Scodel, Kirk Ormand, Gregory Nagy, Ornella Rossi, Irene Peirano. In its more advanced stages, Egbert Bakker, Pauline LeVen, Victor Bers, Douglas Cairns, David Elmer, Erwin Cook, Jonathan Ready, Ryan Kemp, Mark Jonas, Matthew Farrelly, and the participants of MACTe read or heard portions of the project and helped—some in very small ways, others quite significantly—to improve the final product. At a crucial, late stage in the revision process, I received some much-needed help from Justin Arft and Tobias Myers. Joel Christensen and Lilah Grace Canevaro kindly shared with me pre-publication versions of their new work. Portions of the work were also heard by audiences at Xavier University, the University of Wisconsin–Madison, the University of St Andrews, Yale University, the University of California–Santa Barbara, Brigham Young University, and Wheaton College, as well as at meetings of the Society for Classical Studies, the Classical Association of the Middle West and South, the Classical Association of

the Atlantic States, and the Association of Literary Scholars, Critics, and Writers. Wheaton College has supported my writing through a generous grant from the G.W. Aldeen Memorial Fund and by enabling me to hire Jessica Johnson, who has been an enormous help. I also owe thanks to *Ramus* and its editors, who first published an earlier version of portions of chapters 2 and 5 in my 2015 article, “Eurykleia’s Silence and Odysseus’ Enormity: The Multiple Meanings of Odysseus’ Triumphs” (© Aural Publications 2015, reprinted with permission). I especially want also to thank the anonymous readers of this manuscript. I am deeply indebted to them. On account of their anonymity, their careful work on my behalf can never be reciprocated directly. My gratitude can only find some, limited expression in the similar work I shall feel forever obliged to do on behalf of other writers. Special thanks are owed to H. Don Cameron for first spurring my love for the *Odyssey*.

Wheaton, July 2018

Abbreviations

Ameis-Hentze-Cauer	Ameis, Karl Friedrich, Karl Hentze, and Paul Cauer. 1908–1911. <i>Homers Odyssee</i> . Leipzig: B. G. Teubner.
Danek	Danek, Georg. 1998. <i>Epos und Zitat: Studien zu den Quellen der Odyssee</i> . Vienna: Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften.
Crawford	Crawford, Michael H. 1996. <i>Roman Statutes</i> . Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies Supplement 64. London: Institute of Classical Studies, School of Advanced Study, University of London.
de Jong	de Jong, Irene J. F. 2001. <i>A Narratological Commentary on the Odyssey</i> . Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
DELG	Chantraine, P. B. A. and C. d. P. J. L. Lamberterie. 1999. <i>Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue grecque: Histoire des mots</i> . Paris: Klincksieck.
GEW	Frisk, Hjalmar. 1960. <i>Griechisches etymologisches Wörterbuch</i> . Heidelberg: C. Winter.
Heubeck et al.	Heubeck, Alfred, Stephanie West, J. B. Hainsworth, Arie Hoekstra, Joseph Russo, and Manuel Fernández-Galiano. 1988–1992. <i>A Commentary on Homer's Odyssey</i> . 3 vols. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
IC	Guarducci, M. 1935–50. <i>Inscriptiones Creticae opera et consilio Friederici Halbherr collectae</i> , I–IV. Roma: Libreria dello Stato.
IG I ³	Lewis, David and Lilian Jeffery. 1981, 1994. <i>Inscriptiones Graecae I: Inscriptiones Atticae Euclidis anno anteriores</i> . 3rd ed. Berlin: De Gruyter.
IG XII.9	Ziebarth, Erich. 1915. <i>Inscriptiones Graecae XII, fasc. 9: Inscriptiones Euboeae insulae</i> . Berlin: De Gruyter.

Kirk et al.	Kirk, G. S., Mark W. Edwards, Richard Janko, John B. Hainsworth, and Nicholas J. Richardson. 1985–1993. <i>The Iliad: A Commentary</i> . 6 vols. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
<i>Lfgre</i>	Snell, Bruno and Hans Joachim Mette. 1955–2011. <i>Lexikon des frühgriechischen Epos</i> . Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.
<i>LSAG</i>	Jeffery, L. H. 1961. <i>The Local Scripts of Archaic Greece</i> . Rev. ed. with a supplement by A. W. Johnston. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990.
Merry-Riddell-Monro	Merry, W. Walter, James Riddell, and D. B. Monro. D. B. 1886–1901. <i>Homer's Odyssey</i> . Oxford: Clarendon Press.
Stanford	Stanford, W. B. 1947–1948. <i>Homer: Odyssey</i> . 2 vols. Reprint of 2nd ed. London: Bristol Classical Press, 1996.
van Effenterre and Ruzé	van Effenterre, Henri and Françoise Ruzé. 1994–1995. <i>Nomima: Recueil d'inscriptions politiques et juridiques de l'archaïsme grec</i> . 2 vols. Roma: École Française de Rome.

The abbreviations used in this volume for journals and book series follow the conventions of the *American Journal of Archaeology* and *L'Année philologique*. The abbreviations for ancient texts follow *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, 4th edition (2012). For Mycenaean texts, I follow Bennett and Olivier (1976) and Chadwick et al. (1986–98).

*The Ethics of Revenge
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Introduction

AFTER MORE THAN 12,000 lines of epic narrative, moments from its end, the *Odyssey* is poised to undo itself, to erase (at least on Ithaca) the story of Odysseus' triumphant return and, by implication, even his involvement in the Trojan War. Faced with the threat of "further destructive warfare and dire din of battle" (προτέρω πόλεμόν τε κακὸν καὶ φύλοπιν αἰνὴν, 24.475) because the kin of the suitors whom Odysseus has slain have assembled and are determined on vengeance, Zeus institutes a general amnesia. He promises "a forgetting of the slaying of their sons and brothers" (παίδων τε κασιγνήτων τε φόνοιο ἔκκλησιν, 484–85). The reach of this act of forgetting is far broader than might be expected. The victims of the slaughter-to-be-forgotten include not only the suitors just killed in Odysseus' household, but must also include all the men who left with Odysseus for Troy twenty years ago—none of whom returned. Eupheithes, the main proponent of vengeance upon Odysseus and his party, had cited the loss of both groups in his indictment of Odysseus (426–29):

ὦ φίλοι, ἡ μέγα ἔργον ἀνὴρ ὅδε μήσατ' Ἀχαιοῦς·
τοὺς μὲν σὺν νήεσσιν ἄγων πολέας τε καὶ ἐσθλοὺς
ᾧλεσε μὲν νῆας γλαφυράς, ἀπὸ δ' ᾧλεσε λαούς,
τοὺς δ' ἐλθὼν ἔκτεινε Κεφαλλήνων ὅχ' ἀρίστους.

Friends, this man plotted a great deed against the Achaeans.

Some, many and good ones, he took off with ships.

He lost the hollow ships; he utterly lost the men.

Some, by far the best of the Cephallenians, he killed when he came back.¹

1. Unless otherwise noted, I follow von der Mühl's (1962) Greek text of the *Odyssey* and Allen's (1931) of the *Iliad*. All translations of ancient and modern texts are my own, unless otherwise indicated.

Eupeithes considers these two groups of men—balanced against each other with *τοὺς μὲν* and *τούς δ'*—equivalent for the purpose of condemning Odysseus. In an important sense, whether or not Odysseus is culpable for the deaths of all these men—those he “lost” (*ἀπό . . . ὤλεσε*) and those he “slew” (*ἔκτεινε*)—no longer matters once Eupeithes has succeeded in mobilizing an armed force against him. No matter the right of it, further violence appears inevitable.

This recalls a much earlier scene in which Aigyptios, one of the old men whose sons had left with Odysseus for Troy twenty years earlier, also gives the opening speech of an assembly of Ithacans. Aigyptios is agonized in much the same way as Eupeithes over the loss of a son—only in Aigyptios’ case, his son’s death is unconfirmed. The poet aligns these two aggrieved fathers by using similar diction to introduce their speeches. Consider, first, how Eupeithes is introduced as deeply upset over the slaughter of his son Antinoös (24.422–25):

τοῖσιν δ' Εὐπείθης ἀνά θ' ἴστατο καὶ μετέειπε·
 παιδὸς γάρ οἱ ἄλαστον ἐνὶ φρεσὶ πένθος ἔκειτο,
 Ἀντινόου, τὸν πρῶτον ἐνήρατο δῖος Ὀδυσσεύς·
 τοῦ ὃ γε δάκρυ χέων ἀγορήσατο καὶ μετέειπεν·

425

Eupeithes stood up and spoke among them.
For in his heart lay an unforgettable grief for his son
Antinoös, whom noble Odysseus slew first.
Shedding a tear for him, he spoke and addressed them.

425

Aigyptios is similarly upset over a son whom, as the poet informs us, Polyphemos killed (2.15–24):

τοῖσι δ' ἔπειθ' ἥρως Αἰγύπτιος ἦρχ' ἀγορεύειν,
 ὃς δὴ γήραϊ κυφὸς ἦν καὶ μυρία ἤδη.
 καὶ γὰρ τοῦ φίλος υἱὸς ἅμ' ἀντιθέω Ὀδυσῆϊ
 Ἴλιον εἰς εὐπωλον ἔβη κοίλῃσ' ἐνὶ νηυσίν,
 Ἀντιφῶς αἰχμητῆς· τὸν δ' ἄγριος ἔκτανε Κύκλωψ
 ἐν σπηῇ γλαφυρῷ, πύματον δ' ὀπλίσσατο δόρπον.
 τρεῖς δέ οἱ ἄλλοι ἔσαν, καὶ ὁ μὲν μνηστήρσιν ὁμίλει,
 Εὐρύνομος, δύο δ' αἰὲν ἔχον πατρώϊα ἔργα·
 ἀλλ' οὐδ' ὥς τοῦ λήθεται δουρόμενος καὶ ἀχεύων.
 τοῦ ὃ γε δάκρυ χέων ἀγορήσατο καὶ μετέειπε·

15

To them, then, the hero Aigyptios was the first to speak.
He was bent with old age and knew very many things.
For his dear son, with god-like Odysseus,

15

went to fine-foaled Ilium on hollow ships.

*Antiphos the spearman, he was, whom the wild Cyclops slew
in a hollow cave and made his last meal.*

20

*He had three other sons. One kept the company of the suitors—
Eurynomos. Two were always at the ancestral fieldwork.*

But he had not thus forgotten him, bewailing and mourning him.

Shedding a tear for him, he spoke and addressed them.

The poet refers to the violent deaths of these sons in structurally parallel lines: X whom . . . Y killed (Ἀντιφῶος/Ἀντιφῶος τὸν . . . ἐνήρατο/ἔκτανε . . . Ὀδυσσεύς/Κύκλωψ, 24.424/2.19). There are also parallels of context between these two speeches: two grieving fathers lament sons killed in the company of Odysseus; both died during meals (the suitors' own/Polyphemos') in another's home. Narrative context and especially the similarities of diction between 24.424 and 2.19 suggest a startling alignment that will be slowly revealed as the poem progresses, becoming, as we shall see, most explicit in the aftermath of the slaughter of the suitors—namely, an alignment between Polyphemos and Odysseus, who are here made comparable as agents of the sons' deaths. This bit of background about Antiphos, especially the detail of his death, has troubled some commentators, because it interposes information unknown to Aigyptios.² There is, however, no factual contradiction between this brief mention of his death and the way Odysseus tells it in Book 9. The poet's choice to include this detail adds pathetic irony to the speech and, of more interest to the point at hand, emphasizes a connection between Odysseus and Polyphemos that none of the characters yet appreciates. We might have expected the poet to align Antiphos with Odysseus, both long unaccounted for after departing together on the expedition to Troy. And a detail in line 20 brings the connection to the fore: Antiphos was Polyphemos' "last meal" (πύματον . . . δόρπον). This anticipates Polyphemos' promise, "No-man"—i.e., Odysseus—"I will eat last" ("Οὐτιν ἐγὼ πύματον ἔδομαι, 9.369). As events unfold, Polyphemos never fulfills his promise. (Or, in an ironic sense, he does fulfill it, if we hear in his threat a statement that "no one" [οὐτιν] of the party of Greeks will be a last meal.) Instead of drawing Odysseus and Antiphos together, the resonance between these lines heightens the difference in their situations. If Antiphos is Polyphemos' last meal, Odysseus will not be. Antiphos will take Odysseus' place in the belly of the Cyclops.

Does Odysseus have any blame in this? Right from the beginning, the poet raises the question of whether Odysseus is responsible for the deaths of the

2. See Heubeck in Heubeck et al. 130.

companions—though the proem explicitly denies it: “But even so he could not protect his companions, though he longed to” (ἀλλ’ οὐδ’ ὧς ἐτάρους ἐρρύνσατο, ἰέμενός περ, 1.6). But this question does not disappear. The belief that Odysseus is at fault for the deaths of the companions, as well as for the deaths of the suitors, will find voice near the end of the poem, when Eupheithes explicitly equates the consequences of Odysseus’ leadership of the Ithacan expedition to Troy with his slaughter of the suitors: both actions result in an entire group of young Ithacan men dying.

The parallels between these two speeches go deeper.³ Both fathers are moved by an unforgettable grief over their lost sons (παιδός . . . ἄλαστον . . . πένθος/ οὐδ’ ὧς τοῦ λήθετ’, 2.423/2.23). The poet makes the identification of these two situations complete by using here (and, significantly, nowhere else) an essentially identical line to introduce their direct speeches (4.425/2.24). Indeed, Aigyptios’ weeping seems slightly out of place at this moment. He is mourning for Antiphos, but Antiphos’ absence is hardly new. Within the logic of the narrative, it would seem to be that Telemachos, arriving at the assembly like his father and taking his father’s seat (2.14), reminds Aigyptios of Odysseus and the son he has lost to Odysseus’ expedition. The scale and acuteness of Aigyptios’ grief seems inappropriate to the moment. As such, this is an example of the “pregnant tears” device: a character weeps out of proportion to the apparent cause and thereby ironically alludes to a more serious cause of his or her grief.⁴ Aigyptios’ present tears foreshadow his greater calamity to come. Twenty years after the Ithacan force left for Troy, Aigyptios is still hoping for “some word of the travelling army” (τιν’ ἀγγελίην στρατοῦ . . . ἐρχομένοιοι, 2.30).⁵ Ignorant as he is of Antiphos’ gruesome

3. A few scholars have briefly noted the structural and thematic connections between these two speeches: among others, Heubeck (1954) 39, Nagler (1990) 343 n. 23, Barker (2009) 109, Grethlein (2017) 213, 252. However, the full implications of connecting these two speeches have not been appreciated.

4. See the recent discussion by Currie (2016) 105–46. About Andromache’s and Astyanax’s emotional reactions in *Iliad* 6, he writes: “The intensity of the characters’ emotions imbues the scene with special importance, more than it would otherwise be felt to have. The pregnancy of these tears creates something like the . . . ‘interpretative gap’ or ‘tension’ in the narrative that is associated with metaphor and allusion. Because the tears seem more than the immediate situation warrants, they point the audience to another situation that is implicit in the actual narrative situation . . .” (112). Thetis’ and the Nereids’ tears for Patroklos in *Iliad* 18 is another classic example, well-known in the work of neoanalysis, beginning with Kakridis (1949) 65–75.

5. There is some dispute on the meaning of this phrase. Is it the threat of an invading foreign army or word of Odysseus’ army? The scholia give both interpretations. With Ameis-Hentze-Cauer ad 2.17 and de Jong ad 2.15–37, I prefer the latter. The line with a form of the participle ἐρχόμενος that most closely matches this line explicitly refers to Odysseus: “Or does he bring some word of your travelling father?” (ἤέ τιν’ ἀγγελίην πατρός φέρει ἐρχομένοιοι, 1.408).

end as a meal for Polyphemos, he imagines that perhaps Antiphos may yet return. His failure (or unwillingness) to forget is like Penelope's at the opening of the poem, who too is possessed by an "unforgettable grief" (πένθος ἄλαστον, 1.342) and "long[s]" (ποθέω, 343) for Odysseus, "ever remembering" (μεμνημένη αἰεὶ, 343) him. The poet will not mention Aigyptios again after this scene in Book 2. But we can infer how he might have reacted to the events that followed. We know that no reliable news of the missing men who went with Odysseus reaches the island (cf. the false reports mentioned at 14.121–32). Odysseus arrives and kills the suitors with such stealth that we can assume Aigyptios will only learn of the fate of those men when the story of the slaughter in Odysseus' household reaches him. He will realize all at once that, not one, but two of his sons are now dead. Not only has Odysseus slain his son Eurynomos with the other suitors, but also, since Odysseus returned alone and defeated them on his own, any lingering hope that his other son Antiphos might be alive is gone.

At this juncture, a moment of Iliadic pathos intrudes upon the *Odyssey*: Aigyptios' fate recalls the *Iliad*'s motif of the two sons of an aged father whom a Greek warrior kills in his *aristeia*, leaving their father doubly bereaved.⁶ The case of Phainops makes for an acute parallel. Diomedes attacks his two sons (*Il.* 5.152–58):

βῆ δὲ μετὰ Ξάνθον τε Θόωνά τε Φαίνοπος υἱε
 ἄμφω τηλυγέτω· ὃ δὲ τεύρετο γήραϊ λυγρῶ,
 υἱὸν δ' οὐ τέκετ' ἄλλον ἐπὶ κτεάτεσσι λιπέσθαι.
 ἔνθ' ὃ γε τοὺς ἐνάριζε, φίλον δ' ἐξαίνυτο θυμὸν
 155
 ἀμφοτέρω, πατέρι δὲ γόον καὶ κήδεα λυγρὰ
 λεῖπ', ἐπεὶ οὐ ζῶοντε μάχης ἐκ νοστήσαντε
 δέξατο· χηρωσται δὲ διὰ κτῆσιν δατέοντο.

*Then he went after Xanthos and Thoön, the sons of Phainops,
 both dear. Their father was worn out by miserable old age
 and did not beget another son to leave in charge of his possessions.
 Then he slew them and took away the dear spirit
 155
 of both. To their father, lamentation and baneful cares
 he left, since he welcomed them not alive on their return from the battle.
 Distant relatives divided up his estate.*

Like Aigyptios, who is "bent by old age" (γήραϊ κυφός, *Od.* 2.16), Phainops too is "worn out by miserable old age." With the special encouragement and aid of

6. See *Il.* 5.144–65, 11.92–147, 320–35.

Athena, much as Odysseus will have in his battle with the suitors, Diomedes kills “both” (ἄμφω) Phainops’ “dear sons.” The poet again underscores the doubleness of Phainops’ misery by mentioning that these were his only sons and repeating, with the pronoun strongly marked by enjambment, that they “both” (ἀμφοτέρω) died. As the subject of the verb λείπ’ (in a pathetic contrast to λιπέσθαι), Diomedes is emphatically the agent who brings grief to Phainops. The poet is telescoping the distance between the battlefield before Troy and the domestic sphere, as if Diomedes is reaching through to Phainops’ home and afflicting him with “lamentation and baneful cares.” The added details that Phainops’ sons will “return not alive from the battle” and that his estate will be divided up bring home the consequences of the battle. The *Odyssey* presents in the figure of Aigyptios (though he has two more sons) just such an aggrieved father—this time, a Greek—in his own homeland. When Odysseus strikes down Eurynomos in Book 22, it will be in a domestic space. There will be no distance between the battlefield and the home. These parallels between Phainops and Aigyptios, who share in the motif of a father twice bereaved, deepen the impression that Odysseus, like Diomedes, is the real (and possibly culpable) force in the deaths of Antiphos and Eurynomos.

Telemachos had told Penelope it was some comfort that Odysseus was not the only hero who failed to return, that many others had perished too: “for Odysseus did not alone lose the day of his return . . .” (οὐ γὰρ Ὀδυσσεὺς οἶος ἀπώλεσε νόστιμον ἡμᾶρ, *Od.* 1.354). This Homeric truism that the additional deaths of others are a consolation fails in a quite precise way for Aigyptios (and other Ithacans like him): Odysseus does return *alone*, and so Aigyptios cannot commiserate with Odysseus’ family, as he had in Book 2.⁷ The somewhat lengthy introduction to Aigyptios’ speech, with its mention of both Antiphos and Eurynomos, anticipates the coming double blow of his two sons’ deaths. And his speech adds a degree of ironic pathos, since he prays that “Zeus would accomplish some good” for Telemachos (Ζεὺς ἀγαθὸν τελέσειεν, 2.34). His prayer is fulfilled—to his own great misfortune. The poet confirms the foreshadowed death of Aigyptios’ son in Odysseus’ general battle with the suitors (22.242).⁸

7. On this truism, which is rooted in a sense of common suffering and doom of all mortals, see Griffin (1980) 185, de Jong ad 1.345–59, Versnel (2011) 158.

8. Eurynomos is mentioned just this one other time at his death. It is striking that Eurynomos gets mentioned at all. (He is one of only fifteen suitors that are given names in the *Odyssey*.) One function of this is to create a parallel with Eupheithes in Book 24, who occupies a similar structural and ethical position as Aigyptios. We cannot know how Aigyptios reacts to Odysseus’ return and victory over the suitors (and slaying of his other son). The poem is silent. But if we indulge in some speculation, we might imagine, given the parallels between him and

The poet has been preparing for the final confrontation between Odysseus and the kin of the young men he killed since at least as early as the assembly scene in Book 2. As I discuss in chapter 4, the scene showcased an omen of two eagles whose gaze foretold devastation for all assembled. To an even greater extent, Halitherses' interpretation of that omen made Odysseus a force of destruction—an “evil thing” (κακόν, 2.166)—that would have destructive consequences for “many others also” (πολέσιν δὲ καὶ ἄλλοισιν) besides the suitors.

Now, by bringing together both the suitors and those who died on the Trojan expedition, Eupheithes magnifies his and the other Ithacans' grievances against Odysseus. His and Aigyptios' memorious grief requires a commensurate solution. Eupheithes demands vengeance (24.433–36):

λώβη γὰρ τάδε γ' ἐστὶ καὶ ἐσσομένοισι πυθέσθαι,
εἰ δὴ μὴ παίδων τε κασιγνήτων τε φονῆας
τεισόμεθ'. οὐκ ἂν ἐμοί γε μετὰ φρεσὶν ἡδὺ γένοιτο 435
ζώμεν, ἀλλὰ τάχιστα θανὼν φθιμένοισι μετείην.

*For these things are an outrage, even for those to be to learn of,
unless indeed we take revenge on the killers of our sons and brothers.
For my part, it would not be pleasant in my heart 435
to live; rather, would that I swiftly die and be among the dead.*

Zeus has another, different commensurate response to the problem of grief that cannot be forgotten (484–86):

ἡμεῖς δ' αὖ παίδων τε κασιγνήτων τε φόνοιο
ἔκλησιν θέωμεν· τοὶ δ' ἀλλήλους φιλέοντων 485
ὥς τὸ πάρος, πλοῦτος δὲ καὶ εἰρήνη ἅλις ἔστω.

*Let us, in turn, establish a forgetting of the slaying
of their sons and brothers. And let them love one another 485
as before, and let there be wealth and peace in abundance.*

Zeus echoes Eupheithes' demand of 50 lines earlier, but replaces vengeance with amnesia: “Let us, in turn, establish a forgetting of the slaying of their sons and brothers.”

Eupheithes, Aigyptios joining in Eupheithes' faction to avenge the deaths of his two sons, and to imagine Odysseus making this sympathetic figure into a foe.

The consequences of this forgetting have been underappreciated. Zeus does not somehow restore the lives of the Ithacans who died—neither those who perished at Troy, nor on Ithaca, nor on the perilous voyage in between. They remain dead. If their deaths must be forgotten, must also their lives?⁹ Outside Ithaca, Odysseus' *kleos* for his feats at Troy abounds, as it will for his killing the suitors.¹⁰ But this slaughter is the very action that will be eradicated from memory on Ithaca. While his *kleos* for these actions will continue to be proclaimed to audiences across time and space through the power of the Muses, on Ithaca the epic of Odysseus' twenty years of travails and triumphs—that is, the *Odyssey*—must be forgotten.

What brings the poem to this point of (local) self-erasure? Why must the gods intervene to leave Odysseus' final victory and reestablished reign resting upon a lie? Is this final settlement truly happy? What does it mean for evaluating Odysseus' character? In this book, I attempt to answer these questions. At this point, however, it will suffice to say that underlying this poem is an organizing principle that demands this radical ending. The *Odyssey's* term for this principle is *tisis* (roughly, “revenge” or “retributive justice”). To be more precise, the poem has a narrative and ideological structure that is best expressed in language by the term *tisis* (and etymologically related words). Needless to say, revenge is present throughout ancient Greek culture. But the *Odyssey* has a particular take on it. The object of this book is to analyze this narrative/ideological structure of *tisis*, as it is presented and used in the poem, and show how crucial it is for interpreting the meaning of the poem. *tisis* is an essential aspect of more than Odysseus' victory over the suitors. It structures much of the poem, from Menelaos' reminiscences on Sparta to Poseidon's wrath against the Phaiakians. These several cases of *tisis* resonate with one another and help shape the interpretation of Odysseus' culminating vengeance against the suitors. In the concluding chapters of this book, the full implications of the *Odyssey's* take on *tisis* will come into view.

9. Perhaps this is to push the implications of the amnesia too far, but how would deleting only the end of their lives, while leaving the gaping void of their unexplained absence, put to rest Eupheithes' grief over the Ithacans who never returned from Troy? Without these Ithacans to crew his ship, Odysseus could not have sailed to Troy, not have sacked the city, and—having never left in the first place—not have returned and slain his rivals.

10. On Odysseus' fame among his contemporaries for his involvement in the Trojan War, see 3.83–85, 4.240–89, 8.73–82, 492–520; for his slaying the suitors, see 24.120–202, where the shade of the suitor Amphimedon recounts the slaughter and Agamemnon praises Odysseus and Penelope. The poet of the *Odyssey* narrates the slaughter in Book 22 as an *aristeia* in the tradition of heroic epic—a conventional scene of triumph conferring *kleos*: see Müller (1966) 136–45, Nagy (1979) 35–40, Cook (1995) 152, 164. After his *aristeia*, although Odysseus tries to restrain the “wide report/fame of the slaughter . . . of the suitors” (κλέος ἐὺρὺ φόνου . . . ἀνδρῶν μνηστῆρων, 23.137–38), the rumor of their deaths spreads uncontrollably (24.413–14).

THIS BOOK IS organized roughly in three parts of two chapters each. The first two chapters present the theoretical and methodological groundwork for the analysis of instances of *tisis* that come in the following chapters. While the first chapter addresses the wider background of *tisis* in Greek culture, the second chapter presents a narrative model, based on Zeus' own authoritative account of the vengeance of Orestes, which is operative in the *Odyssey*. The following two chapters apply this model to other cases of *tisis* in the *Odyssey*, with the fourth chapter examining in detail Odysseus' *tisis* against suitors. However, it must be observed that the version of Orestes' myth that Zeus presents is very selective, omitting several complicating details and narrative threads, such as the death of Iphigenia and Orestes' later sufferings at the hands of the Furies. Any individual narrative of *tisis* turns out to be much more complicated than Zeus' story seems to suggest. We will see some indication of that already in the earlier chapters, such as the way Polyphemos and Odysseus can each use narratives of *tisis* to describe their encounter. But a full examination of the instabilities inherent in *tisis* comes in the final two chapters. The last chapter in particular deals with the apparent inconclusiveness of Odysseus' vengeance and the need for the ultimate act of divine intervention—the startling amnesia which terminates both the poem and further cycles of *tisis*.

I suspect—indeed, I hope—that the results of my study of *tisis* will surprise some readers. My conclusions—especially about the abrupt, deliberately inconclusive ending of the *Odyssey* and about the ethical position of Odysseus as an agent of vengeance—are meant to be new and experimental. My goal has been to see how far we might take the different threads of the argument. Some readers, no doubt, will not follow me all the way to the conclusions that I reach. As with any experiment, my effort may not prove an unqualified success. But I hope that, even for the skeptical reader, the arguments and interpretations I offer along the way will be profitable, and at a minimum this study should sharpen the debate about the character of Odysseus. But ultimately, it is my contention that if we take the ethics of this poem seriously and the expectations it itself places upon audiences for ethical interpretation, we will not be able to view the conclusion of the poem with any continued complacency.

PART I

I

The Archaic Context of Vengeance

*Let destruction come upon him at unawares; and let his net
that he hath hid catch himself: into that very destruction
let him fall.*

—PSALM 35:8

Si membrum rupit, ni cum eo pacit, talio esto.

—THE TWELVE TABLES

It will have blood, they say; blood will have blood.

—MACBETH, III.iv

ARCHAIC GREECE HAD an economy of revenge. Vengeance was economic in the sense that, at some level, it was transactional. In English, we may speak of “paying back” as one way to talk about revenge, emphasizing this transactional aspect. In Greek, the lexicon of revenge is essentially transactional in its simplest and oldest meanings. To speak of revenge in archaic Greece is to invoke a particular kind of reciprocal exchange, of harm for harm. This “negative reciprocity,” as it is sometimes called,¹ is related to other forms of transactional relationships, but with its own internal logic. In this chapter, I outline this logic of revenge as it appears in a wider archaic Greek context.

It is worth first considering how Greeks spoke about revenge, what language they used, and what this terminology means for the way they thought about and enacted revenge. Paying attention to the specific diction Greeks used does the important work of giving an emic description of these practices and concepts in their specific context, rather than an overly etic, present-derived description. For this reason, I do not pay particularly close attention to what English words—“revenge,” “retribution,” “vengeance,” and the like—I use to denote revenge-taking in this analysis. As I show in the next chapter, the key term for revenge in the *Odyssey*

1. On this terminology, see pp. 23–24 n. 23 later.

is *τίσις* and etymologically connected words. These constitute the Homeric lexicon of revenge. For the most part, I adopt Homeric usage and will write of “*tisis*,” though occasionally I use English terms for the sake of convenience or *variatio*. I use *tisis* both to reflect better the Homeric lexicon and to avoid importing too many preconceptions from English usage. There are other terms that appear in the *Odyssey* and may express the idea of retributive justice—*δίκη* and *ὄπις*, for instance—but *tisis* has particular importance for the meaning of the poem.

1.1 *The Language of tisis and Legal Documents*

tisis is an action noun built on the Proto-Indo-European root *k^wei-, which, according to Pokorny, has a semantic core of “observe.” More importantly, it had already developed meanings connected with revenge.² In Homer, there is an extensive group of words derived from this same root: *τίνω*, *τίνυμαι*, *ἀποτίνω*, *ἀποτίνυμαι*, *τίσις*, *ἄτιτος*, *ἄντιτος*, *παλίντιτος*, *ποινή*, *ἄποινα*, *ἀνάποινον*, and *νήποινος*.³ In other Greek texts, compounds formed with *ἐκ*- and *προσ*- appear as well. Archaic Doric has **τιτύς* and **τίτας*. (Another common Greek word for “avenger,” *τιμωρός*, and its derivatives do not appear until the 5th century.)

In the great majority of instances in early Greek literary texts—though not in every case—this language of *tisis* has to do with retribution. In its most basic sense, this terminology of retribution is transactional. The Greek ideology of revenge imagines a victim, a wrongdoer, and an avenger—sometimes with an intermediary—as engaged in a relationship of paying and receiving. This economic aspect is more apparent in the documentary evidence, in which the language of *tisis* is closely associated with monetary penalties. This evidence shows that the language of *tisis* was in circulation in Greece long before the Homeric poems were written down, and Greeks continued to use it in legal contexts alongside poetic ones.

In Mycenaean Greek we find an example of *τίνω* where it appears to be used to indicate receiving a plot of land as compensation for manslaughter.⁴

2. Pokorny (1959) 636–37.

3. On these derivations and their etymology, see *DELG* and *GEW* (s.vv.). Some scholars would include words connected with the verb *τίω* (“honor”), such as *τιμή*, but this is much disputed: for a recent treatment of the debate with reference to further bibliography, see Du Sablon (2014) 23–27. The major obstacle to connecting *τίσις* with *τιμή* and its accepted cognates is that the latter all have an original long *-ī-* (with many secondary shortenings): see Weiss (2017).

4. See Wilson (2002) 21, citing Killen (1992) 378–80. See now also Nakassis (2013) 128, 326.

Other examples in Mycenaean documents seem to refer to simple economic transactions.⁵ Consider this case from Pylos (Py Fr 1206):

po-ti-ni-ja a-si-wi-ja to-so **qe-te-jo** QLE + PA 5 V 4

To the Asiatic(?) Mistress so much oil must be paid 94 QT

Here we have an offering that “must be paid” (*qe-te-jo*) to a goddess. (*qe-te-jo*, which is the best attested Mycenaean cognate of *tisis*, would be equivalent to a hypothetical Attic adjective **τειτέον*.)⁶ In this case, the exchange is of benefits: an offering of oil to a goddess in the hope that she will favor and protect the Pylians.⁷ Already in the Bronze Age, thus, we see the language of *tisis* involved in transactions between mortals and between mortals and gods, some involving an exchange of harms and at least one an exchange of benefits.

Consistent with the Mycenaean evidence, archaic legal documents also reveal how the language of *tisis* was connected with transactions and retribution. Archaic Gortyn was a community that produced a number of important surviving legal texts, especially the monumental inscription known as the Gortyn law code (*IC IV.72*), and this provides a good case study. Although *tisis* language does not appear in the Gortyn law code itself, in other contemporary local texts we do find this terminology.

One term is particularly noteworthy: the noun *τίτας*. Apart from one place in Aeschylus, the noun is attested nowhere except in Gortynian legal inscriptions.⁸ At Gortyn, *τίτας* is a title for an official, or usually a board of officials, the scope of whose duties is not precisely clear. But one of their duties is to ensure the sentence of a fine is carried out. In one early-5th-century case, they are identified as the officials to whom a fine is to be paid (*IC IV 78*, cf. 165). This law sets a fine of 100 staters for illegally seizing a freedman as well as requires the guilty

5. For example, texts from Pylos (Py Aa 777, Ab 563, Ad 691, An 199; fragmentary Aa 854, Ab 1100) refer to certain persons as *e-ke-ro-qo-no*, usually interpreted as “wage-earners,” equivalent to a hypothetical Attic form **ἐγγειρόποινος*—i.e., from the o-grade stem *ποιν-*. See Ventris and Chadwick (1956) 161; see also Olsen (2014) 93, 268. Cf. *qo-i-na* in Kn X 7735, which might be equivalent to Attic *ποινή*; however, the text is very fragmentary.

6. Lejeune (1971) 301–306. The evidence is collected in Hutton (1990), who does, however, have some doubts about this interpretation.

7. On this sort of reciprocity between the Mycenaeans and their gods, see Hiller (2011), esp. 203.

8. At *Choe.* 67 *τίτας* means “avenger,” used adjectivally as a noun in apposition to *φόνος* (both “murder” and the results of murder, “gore”). It may have been coined anew by Aeschylus, but its meaning in this passage is consistent with the texts from Crete: see Fraenkel (1950) 45–47 and Silk (1974) 100. As a rule (on occasion bent), I avoid engaging with Aeschylus in this book because of his comparative lateness and the additional length such a discussion would require.

“pay” (ἐστέισαντας, cognate with *tisis*) double the value of the goods seized. The *titai* in this case are obliged to exact the fine, on pain of themselves having to pay “double damages” (τὰν διπλείαν ἄ[ταν])—once to the plaintiff and once to the city as a whole—if they fail in their duty. This mechanism, which helps ensure officials do their duty in executing judgments, has parallels in other early Greek legal contexts: for example, a 6th-century Eretrian law (*IG* XII.9.1273/4) which stipulates that, if the guilty party “does not pay” (μὲν τεῖσει), the “officials” (ἀρχός) are liable.⁹ Another 6th-century law from Gortyn institutes a similar procedure involving, in this case, a singular *titas*. The relevant and best-preserved section runs as follows (*IC* IV.14.g–p):

— πεντήρονα λέβη[τας] ἐκάστω καταστᾶσαι. ῥόσμος ὁ ἐπιστάς, | αἰ
μὴ ἐστέισαιτο, ἄ[τ]τ[ὸν] πῆλ[εν] | καὶ τὸν τίταν, | αἰ μὴ ᾽στέισαιτο, τ[ὰν]
διπλέαν —

... fifty cauldrons for each he is to pay. The official in charge, if he should not exact [the penalty], himself shall owe it, and the titas, if he does not exact it, [shall himself owe double.]¹⁰

If, as seems likely, the supplement is correct, this text has two different officials responsible for “exacting” (ἐστέισαιτο) a fine (which, incidentally, exemplifies the typical use of the verb (ἐκ)τίνω in the middle voice). There is an “official in charge” (ῥόσμος ὁ ἐπιστάς) and a *titas*. Following the order of conditional clauses, it would appear that the *titas* is responsible when the *kosmos* has failed to exact a penalty.¹¹ A similar enforcement mechanism is at work in the one other archaic text from Gortyn that refers to *titai* (*IC* IV.79). The few other attested appearances of this noun appear consistent with this interpretation, often in contexts of “paying” or “exacting payment.”¹² These documentary details support the gloss Hesychius gives for τίται as “the accusers of the magistrates” (κατήγοροι τῶν ἀρχόντων). They ensure that authorities do their duty in punitive transactions. In sum, the *titai* at Gortyn play an intermediary role in punitive transactions: as the recipients of a payment, they stand in for the victim of the

9. On such enforcement mechanisms, see Gagarin (1986) 91–94.

10. I follow the supplements of van Effenterre and Ruzé 1.308–11.

11. Thus van Effenterre and Ruzé.

12. Cf. *IC* IV.15, which has the lines—τῖνεν καὶ τίτας ὅς κα—/—τιτοφτὸς λ[—] (“... is to pay and the *titas*, whoever... / ... the one subject to a penalty”[?]); cf. also *IC* IV.102, 107, 165. The recent, authoritative summary of Cretan law by Gagarin and Perlman (2016), esp. 280, concurs with the interpretation I have offered.

offense; as guarantors of a penalty, they stand in for the wrongdoer, making a payment in his place. It may be on account of this two-sided, mediating aspect of their office that Gortynians came up with the unique title of *titas* with the meaning “agent of *tisis*, of punitive exchange.”

There are a few more examples of the language of *tisis* appearing in Gortynian inscriptions. I have already mentioned the example of the verb ἐστίνω in IC IV.78 as denoting the payment of a fine. Such compound forms of the verb τίνω are more common than the bare verb, but τίνω does appear with the same meaning.¹³ A few other terms appear at Gortyn connected with *tisis* in punitive and transactional contexts, as far as can be determined.¹⁴

The language of *tisis* in these documentary texts is transactional. It usually indicates the reciprocal exchange of one harm for another (e.g., a fine for the theft of livestock or rape of a dependent), and the transactional aspect of this exchange is foregrounded. This is most clear in the case of the officials known as the *titai*, who act like agents in an economic exchange of harms. Even in Homer, the language of *tisis* is used in a handful of situations where retribution as such is not involved, where the transaction is strictly compensation for a transfer of goods. For instance, Alkinoös urges the Phaiakians to give Odysseus parting gifts and afterwards “recompense ourselves” (τεισόμεθ', *Od.* 13.15) by “gathering from the people” (ἀγειρόμενοι κατὰ δῆμον, 14)—what amounts to taxation. Although such neutral examples of simple payment with no implication of harm are rare, that examples such as Alkinoös' taxation of the Phaiakians and the Pylia offering to the goddess do exist shows a more basic meaning of “paying” underlies *tisis* and related words.¹⁵ But in the great majority of instances in archaic Greek texts, this diction signifies an exchange of harm for harm—that is, retribution.

13. See IC IV.15, IV.41.1; IC IV.1 has ἐστίνω and τίνω used for both exacting a retributive penalty (in the middle voice) and paying back (i.e., suffering) such a penalty (in the active voice) in the context of fights between shepherds and harm done to herds. See van Effenterre and Ruzé 2.88. This pattern of usage of middle and active voice is maintained in Homer. See Bile (1988) 328 for more examples. Outside Gortyn: cf. τίν<τ>εσθα(ι) in van Effenterre (1946) 590 (2) from late-7th-century Dreros; ἀποτεισεῖ in IC I.x.2, from Eltynia c. 500 B.C.

14. Cf. *τιτύς, “penalty,” the hypothetical nominative of the attested τιτύφος in IC IV.13 and τιτύ IV.4; τιτοφτός (see n. 12 earlier); ποινῶς in IC IV.8; τιτουφέσθω, perhaps “pay a penalty,” in IC II.v.9.

15. One more neutral example occurs when the disguised Odysseus has sworn to Eumaios that Odysseus is about to return. In exchange for this information, Odysseus requests that, when Odysseus comes, he receive clothing as a gift for his good news. Eumaios, however, despairs that Odysseus will return and declares that never “will I give you this gift for good news” (εὐαγγέλιον τόδε ρείσω, *Od.* 14.166). There is no suggestion of retribution between Eumaios and Odysseus.

1.2 *A Preliminary Example: The Sons of Panthoös*

In the section after this one, I will explain in greater detail the transactional aspects of *tisis* to which I have already alluded. But first we should recognize that this basic model of exchange of harm for harm becomes more complex in literary texts. A relatively straightforward example of (attempted) revenge from Book 17 of the *Iliad* illustrates the important issues. In this example, the Trojan warrior Euphorbos seeks to avenge his brother by killing the latter's killer, Menelaos: "Now then, god-nourished Menelaos, certainly you will pay for my brother, whom you slew" (*νῦν μὲν δὴ Μενέλαε διοτρεφὲς ἦ μάλα τεύσεις γνωτὸν ἐμὸν τὸν ἔπεφνες*, 17.34–35). Thus Euphorbos uses *τίνω* in a typical way (with a mixture of the predictive, intentional, and threatening meanings that the future tense may carry).¹⁶ The target of vengeance is the subject of the verb (in the active voice): he "pays for" the one killed. The original victim is the direct object. As we will see, the penalty to be paid may also serve in that role. This is an indication of the interchangeability of victim and penalty: a target of vengeance either "pays a penalty" or, to put it literally, "pays" a slain victim. The idea, therefore, is analogous to the practice of paying ransom (in Greek, *ἄποινα*—another cognate of *tisis*). With ransom, a kinsman of a captured person volunteers to undergo one sort of loss instead of another—for example, to pay gold to the captor instead of giving up the captured relative. In this way, taking revenge is imagined as causing a foe to pay for the harm (typically a death) he has caused.

The present example of Euphorbos' attempted revenge begins to illustrate how, when considered in its narrative context, even a relatively simple case of *tisis* draws attention to certain contested aspects of its ideology. The encounter begins when Menelaos is protectively standing over Patroklos' corpse and Euphorbos moves to despoil the body. Euphorbos tells Menelaos to retreat (17.12–17):

Ἀτρεΐδῃ Μενέλαε διοτρεφὲς ὄρχαμε λαῶν
 χάζεο, λείπε δὲ νεκρόν, ἕα δ' ἔναρα βροτόεντα·
 οὐ γάρ τις πρότερος Τρώων κλειτῶν τ' ἐπικούρων
 Πάτροκλον βάλε δουρὶ κατὰ κρατερὴν ὑσμίνην.
 τῷ με ἕα κλέος ἐσθλὸν ἐνὶ Τρώεσσιν ἀρέσθαι,
 μὴ σε βάλῃ, ἀπὸ δὲ μελιγδέα θυμὸν ἔλωμαι.

15

*Menelaos, son of Atreus, Zeus-nurtured leader of the army,
 give way, leave behind the corpse, and let alone the bloody spoils.
 For none of the Trojans or their famous allies*

16. On the semantics of the future tense in Homer, see Christensen (2010) 546–51.

earlier struck Patroklos with a spear in mighty battle. 15
 So, leave me to take up noble renown among the Trojans,
 lest I hit you and rob you of your honey-sweet spirit.

At this juncture, he says he is interested only in the “noble renown” he can obtain by bringing back Patroklos’ armor, not in killing Menelaos. However, the last line of Euphorbos’ speech is a threat: Menelaos ought to give way, “lest I hit you and rob you of your honey-sweet spirit.” From a pragmatic point of view, Euphorbos’ remark comes across as a boast and, potentially, as an invitation to a duel. At least, this is how Menelaos understands it: he is “greatly angered” (μέγ’ ὀχθήσας, 18) and, in a gnomic sentiment aimed at Euphorbos, condemns “excessive boasting” (ὑπέρβιον εὐχετάσθαι, 19).¹⁷ Nonetheless, Euphorbos’ motive at this point seems to be to win glory by taking Patroklos’ armor, which he claims to have a right to by virtue of being the first Trojan to wound him (14–15). Defeating Menelaos would seem to be secondary, and there is as yet no hint of revenge. But the character of this confrontation is about to change.

Menelaos condemns Euphorbos’ boast by referring to what happened on an earlier occasion to another Trojan, Hyperenor, who claimed he was superior to Menelaos (17.19–32):

Ζεῦ πάτερ οὐ μὲν καλὸν ὑπέρβιον εὐχετάσθαι.
 οὗτ’ οὖν παρδάλιος τόσσον μένος οὔτε λέοντος 20
 οὔτε συὸς κάπρου ὀλοόφρονος, οὐ τε μέγιστος
 θυμὸς ἐνὶ στήθεσσι περὶ σθένει βλεμεαίνει,
 ὅσσον Πάνθου νῆες ἐϋμμελῖαι φρονέουσιν.
 οὐδὲ μὲν οὐδὲ βίη Ὑπερήνορος ἵπποδάμοιο 25
 ἧς ἤβης ἀπόνηθ’, ὅτε μ’ ὤνατο καὶ μ’ ὑπέμεινε
 καὶ μ’ ἔφατ’ ἐν Δαναοῖσιν ἐλέγχιστον πολεμιστὴν
 ἔμμεναι· οὐδέ ἔφημι πόδεσσί γε οἷσι κιόντα
 εὐφρῆναι ἄλοχόν τε φίλην κεδνούς τε τοκῆας.
 ὥς θην καὶ σὸν ἐγὼ λύσω μένος εἴ κέ μευ ἄντα
 στήης· ἀλλὰ σ’ ἔγωγ’ ἀναχωρήσαντα κελεύω 30
 ἐς πληθὺν ἵεναι, μηδ’ ἀντίος ἵστασ’ ἐμείο
 πρὶν τι κακὸν παθέειν· ῥεχθὲν δέ τε νήπιος ἔγνω.

Father Zeus, it is not good to boast excessively.
 Neither is the spirit of the panther so lofty, nor of the lion, 20

17. See Cairns (2003) 22 on the meaning of the formula τὸν/τὴν δὲ μέγ’ ὀχθήσας προσέφη, “greatly moved, he addressed him/her.”

*nor of the destructive-minded wild boar, whose mightiest anger
 in his breast exults exceedingly in might,
 so much as the spear-skilled sons of Panthoös are minded.
 No, not even the mighty Hyperenor, the horse-tamer,
 had benefit of his youth, when he ridiculed me and waited for me* 25
*and said that I was the worst warrior among the Danaans.
 But not on his own feet, I say, did he return
 to bring joy to his dear wife and cherished parents.
In this way indeed also your spirit I will undo, if ever opposite me
 you stand. But I urge you: withdraw,* 30
*retreat into the mass of fighters and do not stand opposite me
 before you suffer some harm. When it is done, even a fool recognizes it.*

On that occasion, Menelaos killed the one who ridiculed him, preventing him, he says, from bringing joy to his wife and parents on his safe return (27–28). Menelaos' remark has the rhetorical shape of a *paradeigma*.¹⁸ Menelaos tells this vignette about Hyperenor as if to instruct Euphorbos on what happened to someone who insulted him in the past and would likewise happen again to Euphorbos: “in this way indeed also your strength will I dissolve” (ὥς θῆν καὶ σὸν ἐγὼ λύσω μένος, 29). (Euphorbos' μένος of here echoes the beasts' μένος of 20.) The moral of the *paradeigma* is that Euphorbos should “retreat” (30–31).

18. I use the Greek term *paradeigma* (and the plural *paradeigmata*) in a technical, rhetorical sense. *παράδειγμα* is the term Aristotle uses for the figure of rhetoric that is equivalent to the induction (*ἐπαγωγή*) of dialectic, both of which he defines as “the demonstration from many similar cases that [the subject] is such” (τὸ ἐπὶ πολλῶν καὶ ὁμοίων δεικνυσθαι ὅτι οὕτως ἔχει, *Rh.*1356b14–15). Just as dialectic induction argues from several particular examples to a general rule, so a rhetorical *paradeigma* takes one or more particular examples and argues that another, similar case shares in the same outcome. The term *paradeigma* does not occur with this meaning until Thucydides, but the trope is already well developed (though unnamed) in Homer. In my analysis of Homeric poetry, I use *paradeigma* in a way similar to how Willcock (1964) 142 uses “paradigm”: “a myth intended for exhortation of consolation.” One important difference in my study is that, like Alden (2000), I see characters using both myth and personal stories in similar ways in order to persuade their audience. They can use stories outside their own experience, which they have heard and are passing on—“myth” in the sense Willcock means, such as the stories of Orestes, Meleager, or Niobe; they can also draw on their own experience in an essentially identical way—such as the story Agamemnon's shade tells. I reserve the use of the term *paradeigma* in the narrow, technical sense for occasions when a speaker cites a story that he intends to carry a moral lesson for his or her addressee. In contrast, I use the English adjective “paradigmatic” in a looser sense of “definitive” or “exemplary.” To avoid confusion, I refrain from the English noun “paradigm,” even where it might have been natural to use it, much as Kuhn (1962) 11 uses it to describe a mode by which people who are “committed to the same rules and standards” explain the world. I instead use “framework” or “model” in this sense when describing certain systems that organize the social world in the poems—for example, when describing a system or “model” of justice.

Framed this way, this *paradeigma* looks like a rather typical hortatory citation of a negative exemplar—a much more succinct example of the type best illustrated by the classic instance in which Phoenix cites Meleager in order to urge Achilles to return to the fight (*Il.* 9.524–605).¹⁹

But this summary I have given omits one crucial detail that radically changes the nature of this confrontation: Hyperenor was Euphorbos' brother. By citing the general arrogance of the sons of Panthoös (23), Menelaos explicitly makes this fact of genealogy a point that connects his present encounter with Euphorbos and his earlier one with that hero's brother. Up to this point, there was no suggestion of vengefulness in Euphorbos' words. Perhaps he was just carefully controlling his feelings, genuinely trying to make Menelaos retreat, afraid that he might face the same fate as his brother. (The Trojan warrior Idaios makes for a useful comparison here, though the roles of protector of a corpse and potential despoiler are reversed. After seeing Diomedes kill his brother Phegeus, Idaios "sprang back" (*ἀπόρουσε*, 5.20) and "did not dare to bestride his slain brother" (*οὐδ' ἔτλη περιβῆναι ἀδελφείου κταμένοιο*, 21) for fear Diomedes would kill him too. And his fear was well warranted. The narrator makes clear he would have died without the intervention of Hephaistos, his father's patron: 22–23.) Or perhaps more likely in this scenario, Euphorbos was making the first move in a ritualized battlefield boasting match, a flying.²⁰ But in either case, Euphorbos conspicuously fails to mention his brother's death at the hands of Menelaos before the latter mentions it. Brother avenging brother on the battlefield is a regular motif in the *Iliad*, but Euphorbos' reticence on this point is unusual.²¹ And this is not the only peculiarity of this passage.

A second, even more unusual element of this encounter is that, when Menelaos refers to Hyperenor's boast, the poem seems to contradict itself. Menelaos says that Hyperenor "ridiculed me and waited for me and said that I was the worst warrior among the Danaans" (25–27). But three books earlier, when the poet narrated Hyperenor's death, he made no mention of any boasting (14.516–19). It

19. On negative *paradeigmata*, see e.g., Alden (2000) 29; on Meleager, see *ibid.* 179–290.

20. On flying, see Martin (1989) 65–77.

21. Compare how Akamas kills Promachos as "vengeance [or, "compensation"] for his brother" (*κασιννήτοιό γε ποινή*, 14.483), who thereby is not "unavenged" (*ἄτιτος*, 484). Akamas then generalizes about the virtue of having a surviving kinsman to avenge oneself (484–85). The other prominent example of brother avenging brother comes in Book 20, when Hektor makes the nearly fatal choice to attack Achilles because Achilles killed his youngest brother, Polydoros—a boy whose death has more than a touch of pathos. Hektor survives this skirmish (to die in Book 22) only because of Apollo's intervention. On battlefield vengeance in the *Iliad*, see Fenik (1968), esp. 160–63 with reference to this episode, and the valuable corrections of Fenno (2008) 152–53.

may simply be the case that the poet omitted this in the earlier case, owing to his fast-paced, catalogue-like narration of the deaths of several Trojan warriors at the close of the book. But there remains a perceptible gap opened up by Menelaos' reference. One influential line of criticism explains this discrepancy as a minor case of the tendency of the poet to invent details tailored to the present narrative situation. In this account, to have Hyperenor boast before his death provides the opportunity for the poet to connect the deaths of both brothers by way of the theme of boasting.²² I would suggest a different, character-oriented possibility that is just as likely (and more interesting). Perhaps Menelaos is the one inventing the details here, not the poet—that is, perhaps Menelaos is lying. With this false allusion, Menelaos manufactures a direct connection to the earlier death of the other brother and reframes Euphorbos' ambiguous words as a clear boast along the lines of the earlier example. This also makes Euphorbos more obviously ready to fight—in fact, it entices him to seek revenge.

Both Euphorbos' earlier silence about his brother and Menelaos' citation (or invention) of Hyperenor's boasting cause this confrontation to pivot toward revenge. Indeed, Hyperenor's death would have been unremarkable without this scene. Most likely, Euphorbos actually had no idea that, in the thick of the melee, Menelaos was the one who killed him—he may even, like Priam vainly looking for Lykaon and Polydoros when they were already dead (22.46–55), not know that he has died. Euphorbos' position is thus much like the audience's: for both the character and the poet's auditors, Hyperenor's death almost escapes notice, until Menelaos recalls and reframes it. Menelaos (and the poet) thus recharacterize the present confrontation and embed it in a larger narrative of *tisis* that extends back three books earlier.

Euphorbos' opening words in his response to Menelaos place *tisis* at the center of their conflict (17.34–40):

νῦν μὲν δὴ Μενέλαε διοτρεφὲς ἡ μάλα **τείσεις**
 γνωτὸν ἐμὸν τὸν ἔπεφνες, ἐπευχόμενος δ' ἀγορεύεις, 35
 χήρωσας δὲ γυναιῖκα μυχῶ θαλάμοιο νέοιο,
 ἀρητὸν δὲ τοκεῦσι γόον καὶ πένθος ἔθηκας.
 ἡ κέ σφιν δειλοῖσι γόου κατὰπαυμα γενοίμην
 εἴ κεν ἐγὼ κεφαλὴν τε τεῖην καὶ τεύχε' ἐνείκας
 Πάνθῳ ἐν χεῖρεσσι βάλω καὶ Φρόντιδι δῖῃ. 40

*Now then, god-nourished Menelaos, certainly you will pay for
 my brother, whom you slew and were speaking of tauntingly,* 35

22. Willcock (1978) 13–14, endorsed by Edwards in Kirk et al., ad 17.24–28; cf. Fenik (1968) 162. I ignore the analysts' typical explanation of multiple poets.

whose wife, in the recess of a new bridal chamber, you made a widow,
 and for whose parents you made lamentation and grief unspeakable.
 Surely I would become a termination of lamentation for them in their misery,
 if ever I bring your head and your armor
 and cast them into the hands of Panthoös and divine Phrontis.

40

Even though his brother died only hours earlier and he may only now have learned of it, Euphorbos projects the causes and effects of his imagined revenge into the past and the future. And although, like Euphorbos, they must still be ignorant of Hyperenor's death, Euphorbos imagines Hyperenor's wife already as a grieving widow and his parents already lamenting (36–37). Euphorbos expects to bring their grief to an end by killing Menelaos (38).

With all these various aspects of the encounter taken together, this scene well exemplifies some key features of revenge in the *Iliad*. A few elements of *tisis* have come into special focus. First, when *tisis* becomes part of an encounter, larger narratives reaching forward and backward in time become involved. Second, the avenger has the role of deciding whether to identify an encounter as a case of *tisis*: Euphorbos chose to reframe their fight in terms of revenge for his brother after Menelaos' taunt. Finally, the avenger can also decide what counts as pay-back: Euphorbos wants Menelaos to die and his corpse and armor to be sent to Hyperenor's parents (39–40), as if to substitute for the return home Hyperenor himself will never have.

1.3 *tisis* as Negative Reciprocity

The most basic and important point about *tisis* that the foregoing brief survey revealed is that revenge is essentially transactional. *tisis* is thus one of the systems of reciprocity that structure much of the Greek social world. Some reciprocal relationships may be described as "positive," involving an exchange of benefits. In such cases the terminology is of "favor" (χάρις) and "gifts" (δῶρα), which present the relationship as ostensibly free, without debts or transactions. *tisis*, on the other hand, is a form of "negative reciprocity," an exchange of harms or losses, and is more blatantly transactional.²³

23. I contrast "positive reciprocity" with "negative reciprocity" after Gouldner (1960) 172: "return of benefits" versus "return of injuries." Sahlins (1972) 195 proposed a different and influential understanding of "negative reciprocity": "the attempt to get something for nothing with impunity." He contrasted this with "generalized reciprocity"—essentially altruism—and with "balanced reciprocity"—essentially fair exchange. My view of Sahlins' "negative reciprocity" is similar to van Wees' (1998) 24. Though Sahlins puts avengers in this category (191), it would

Reciprocity in the ancient Mediterranean world has already received a good deal of scholarly attention.²⁴ Marcel Mauss inaugurated this discussion nearly a hundred years ago with his essay “The Gift.” Mauss saw in all archaic cultures—and especially among the aboriginal inhabitants of Polynesia, Melanesia, and the American Northwest around the time he was writing—a system of gift-exchange pervading the structure of their societies. Mauss was the first to reveal in a systematic way how such gifts were “apparently free and disinterested but nevertheless constrained and self-interested.”²⁵ In fact, the social obligations to give, to accept, and to reciprocate gifts were so great that failure to meet an obligation would result in loss of face, debt-slavery, and even outright warfare.²⁶ For Mauss, the key question was why the objects given seemed to have a force of their own, compelling recipients to pay back, to give again. Mauss answered this by arguing that the societies he examined believed a spiritual force of the original donor remained attached to the object given.²⁷ This spiritual element is easily the most controversial aspect of Mauss’ analysis and is of limited importance in the present study.²⁸

Mauss’ work is important for my analysis of *tisis* for two main reasons. First, his insight into the apparently free but actually obligatory gift provides a useful foil for the openly obligatory requirements of *tisis*. (As we will see later, at a key moment in that peak of the *Iliad*’s action, the duel between Achilles and Hektor, this strong distinction between the forms and language of negative and positive

be better to say they aim to even accounts and prevent their foes from “getting something for nothing.” For that reason, I would classify revenge-taking as “balanced reciprocity” in Sahlins’ typology.

24. For applications of Sahlins’ typology (as described in the previous note) to Homeric society, see Donlan (1982), van Wees (1998), Cook (2016). For a more general theoretical discussion of revenge as a form of economic exchange, see Sloterdijk (2006), esp. 89–92. In his analysis, vengeful anger (*Zorn*) is an asset, of which an avenger has a surplus and which he can give to his victims.

25. Mauss (2000) 3. First published in French in 1925 as “Essai sur le don. Forme et raison de l’échange dans les sociétés archaïques.”

26. Mauss (2000) 5, 42.

27. Mauss (2000) 3: “What rule of legality and self-interest, in societies of a backward or archaic type, compels the gift that has been received to be obligatorily reciprocated? What power resides in the object given that causes its recipient to pay it back?” Mauss used the Maori concepts of *mana*, *tonga*, and especially *hau* to explain the ideology of a gift’s connection to its owner and will to return (10–13). He writes: “. . . the thing given is not inactive. Invested with life, often possessing individuality, it seeks to return to what Hertz called its ‘place of origin’ or to produce, on behalf of the clan and the native soil from which it sprang, an equivalent to replace it.”

28. On the controversy, see Godelier (1999), esp. 49–56; on its relevance to Homer, see Morris (1986) 13 n. 2.

reciprocity becomes important for understanding why Achilles rejects Hektor's plea to return his body.) Second, Mauss showed that there is an important connection between time and reciprocity.

These patterns of exchange are embedded in a whole social system of reciprocities, involving institutions such as marriage, supplication, guest-friendship, feasting, and sacrifice.²⁹ Reciprocities such as these may foster group solidarity, uphold social hierarchies, and secure the general welfare of a group. As a general rule, kinship distance affects the kind of reciprocity two individuals engage in: the nearer in kinship (however kinship is understood), the more likely they are to engage in altruistic forms of reciprocity; the further, the more negative.³⁰

Negative reciprocity in the *Odyssey* is part of this larger system. An act of vengeance on behalf of another is simultaneously a positive and a negative reciprocity: for example, when Poseidon answers Polyphemos' prayer to exact vengeance upon Odysseus. Kinship distance influences how appropriate negative or positive reciprocity is in a given situation. Negative reciprocity is more appropriate for Poseidon with Odysseus or Orestes with Aigisthos.³¹ It is less appropriate for Orestes with Klytaimnestra or (arguably) Odysseus with the suitors, who are members of the same community.³² We could refine the contrast between positive and negative reciprocity further as "negative balanced reciprocity" versus "positive balanced reciprocity." In both cases the goal of the exchange is balance, though the attitude of the participants and quality of the things exchanged are different.³³ In the latter case—perhaps best typified by gift-giving—the one who reciprocates is obliged to make an appropriate return, but of a benefit and with an attitude of goodwill. However, such ostensibly positive reciprocities can easily be turned into reciprocities done out of ill-will: for example, in *Iliad* 9 Agamemnon

29. See esp. Donlan (1982).

30. Sahlins (1972) 196–210: "Reciprocity inclined toward the generalized pole by close kinship, toward the negative extreme in proportion to kinship distance" (196). "Kinship"—which different societies define differently (e.g., genetic, spatial, etc.)—exists along a graded spectrum.

31. The second pair requires some qualification. In the wider mythic tradition, Orestes and Aigisthos are cousins, both descended from Pelops. (In fact, in one version, Aigisthos is taken in by Atreus and raised in his household as Agamemnon's brother: see Hyg. *Fab.* 88.) The poet of the *Odyssey* makes no mention of this relationship, which is in keeping with his agenda to eliminate possible complications to his one-sided portrayal of the "Oresteia" story.

32. Positive reciprocities that exist between those of distant kin relationships—e.g., guest-friendship—create a fictive near-kin relationship, or a real near-kin relationship in the case of marriage: see Cook (2016) 99–100, including further bibliography.

33. See Cook (2016) 97. For simplicity's sake, I will continue to use the term "negative reciprocity" throughout this study.

targets Achilles with a “gift-attack,” offering an enormous gift that indebts and socially diminishes Achilles.³⁴ Such gift-attacks, however, are conducted via an exchange of benefits and are not, in Homer, described in the language of *tisis*, which is reserved for the exchange of harms or losses.

In this study, I have chosen to narrow my focus in order to draw out certain key features of negative reciprocity. In the Greek system of negative reciprocity, certain aspects are emphasized. We can begin to examine these particularly important aspects by posing three questions. (1) What is the relationship between time and *tisis*? (2) In a proper case of *tisis*—that is, one that an agent considers just—what objects are exchanged and in what amount? (3) Closely related to the second question, who gets to decide what constitutes a just exchange? These aspects of the system of reciprocity are especially important in the *Odyssey*. The *Odyssey* tests the limits of the system, and these aspects come under pressure.

1.4 *The Temporality of Negative Reciprocity*

In the process of revising the standard story of the development of markets from cash sale to credit, Mauss showed how gift-exchange implies a delay, a temporal distinction between the moment of giving and the moment of reciprocating. This is different from a simple cash sale or barter exchange, which collapses the two halves of this transaction.³⁵ In order to maintain the pretense that both the initial gift and the reciprocation are entirely gratuitous, there must be a certain span of time distancing gift from counter-gift. Inversely, the closer the two actions occur together, the more the reciprocation will be felt to answer the first gift.

These considerations of the temporal aspects of reciprocity are important for understanding the *Iliad*, as Marcel Widzisz has recently shown, and they will have implications for how we understand *tisis* more broadly in archaic Greek literature. It is worth recapitulating and extending Widzisz’ analysis. Widzisz demonstrates that characters variously succeed or fail to use time strategically in their reciprocal relationships. When Agamemnon demands the Achaeans “immediately” (*αὐτίχ’*, *Il.* 1.118) compensate him for losing Chryseis, he misses the chance to receive greater compensation, to have the Achaeans “pay back three or four times as much” (*τριπλῆ τετραπλῆ τ’ ἀποτέίσομεν*, 128).³⁶ Shortly after

34. Donlan (1993), Wilson (2002) 71–108.

35. Mauss (2000) 35–36, citing the work of Georges Davy.

36. Widzisz (2012) 157–59; cf. Mauss (2000) 42 on the interest that accrues to the potlatch (the Chinook term for the central occasion of gift-exchange among American Indians of the Northwest): “. . . normally, the potlatch must be reciprocated with interest, as must indeed

this, by contrast, Achilles heeds Athena's advice to wait and thus receive "at some point . . . three times as much" (ποτέ . . . τρις τόσσα, 214). Of course, Achilles rejects even more than this in the embassy scene of Book 9. In Widzisz' analysis, this is because Agamemnon tries to dominate the relationship by dictating when Achilles will receive the gifts.³⁷

Widzisz does not consider an important consequence of demanding immediate exchange: it subverts the pretense of gratuity that is essential to a system of positive reciprocity. When Priam demands Achilles "immediately" (τάχιστα) give him Hektor's body in return for the ransom (ἄποινα) (24.553–58), without even the small interval of a meal, he is denying that the exchange can be conducted on the basis of generosity. He is transforming it into a simple economic transaction. He is buying back Hektor's body and Achilles is selling it. This is why Achilles becomes so suddenly angry (559–60). Earlier, Agamemnon roused Achilles' anger by breaking the rules of the social system: he demanded a second prize in place of Chryseis (1.118–20), which, as Achilles remarks, is equivalent to taking back the prizes already distributed and reapportioning them (123–26). Now Priam, in turn, is threatening to circumvent the customs of gift-exchange.³⁸

Widzisz developed his interpretation from Pierre Bourdieu, who was defending Mauss' interest in the temporal aspects of reciprocity against Claude Lévi-Strauss. Like many structuralist theorists, Lévi-Strauss had argued that the interpreter must ignore how a cultural practice appears to happen in time and instead take an objective perspective that views such practices outside of time and in their entirety. For Bourdieu, such a procedure, which he calls "objectivism," may miss essential aspects of a custom. Gift-exchange, and reciprocity more generally, provides Bourdieu with a counter-example. It is worth quoting Bourdieu at length:

The temporal structure of gift exchange, which objectivism ignores, is what makes possible the coexistence of two opposing truths [i.e., that the

every gift. The rate of interest generally ranges from 30–100 per cent a year. Even if a subject receives a blanket from his chief for some service he has rendered he will give two in return on the occasion of a marriage in the chief's family. . . . The obligation to reciprocate worthily is imperative."

37. The popular, aforementioned "gift-attack" interpretation of *Iliad* 9 (see p. 26 n. 34) complements Widzisz' temporal interpretation: both emphasize how Agamemnon can dominate the situation through ostensible generosity.

38. On this scene, see Widzisz (2012) 161–64. While emphasizing the strategic aspects of delaying reciprocation, Widzisz' analysis does not contradict my view. For a different perspective, emphasizing Achilles' altruism, see Zanker (1998), esp. 84 for references to earlier discussions.

gifts and counter-gifts are gratuitous and that they are obligatory], which defines the full truth of the gift. In every society it may be observed that, if it is not to constitute an insult, the counter-gift must be deferred and different, because the immediate return of an exactly identical object clearly amounts to a refusal (i.e. the return of the same object). . . . In short, everything takes place as if agents' practice, and in particular their manipulation of time, were organized exclusively with a view to concealing from themselves and from others the truth of their practice, which the anthropologist and his models bring to light simply by substituting the timeless model for a scheme which works itself out only in and through time.³⁹

Bourdieu articulates clearly how delay is thus required in positive reciprocal exchange in order to uphold the appearance of the system.

Retribution, on the other hand, has the opposite relationship with time. (On this point, I differ with Bourdieu and Widzisz.) Negative reciprocity is best realized by the *immediate* return of an *identical* harm. In fact, avengers feel retribution is at its purest when a wrongdoer simultaneously harms himself by his own attack—"the return of the same object," to quote Bourdieu. This form of negative reciprocity is the idealized version of the *lex talionis*: an injury suffered should incur a like injury in return. It hardly needs to be said that this model of justice forms a strand that runs through much of the thought and practice of the ancient world. Best known to us now by way of the Mosaic formulation of "an eye for an eye," the rule was already proverbial in antiquity.⁴⁰ Following on this tradition, the *lex talionis* has been an influential principle in modern thought on justice as well.⁴¹ The talionic principle of justice embedded in *tisis* represents an

39. Bourdieu (1977) 5–6, with emphasis added. Cf. Coffee (2009) 9–10, who, in his study of reciprocity in Roman imperial poetry, argues that delay is essential for distinguishing reciprocity from "commodity exchange." If the two halves of the transaction occur too close together, it no longer appears gratuitous but instead obligatory.

40. Note how Jesus refers to the custom: "You have heard that it was said" (ἡκούσατε ὅτι ἐπέθην, Matt. 5:38). Cf. *Exod.* 21:12–27, *Lev.* 24:10–23, *Num.* 35:16–32, *Deut.* 19:19–21, Matt. 5:38–42. In classical Athens it was also proverbial: Aeschylus cites the custom, calling it the "triply-old story" (τριγέρον μῦθος, *Choe.* 314). Cf. *Ag.* 1429–30, 1527–29, 1560–64, *Choe.* 930, Hes. fr. 286.2 M–W, Pind. *Nem.* 4.32, Soph. fr. 223b R, Arist. *Eth. Nic.* 1132b. For Greek uses, see Vlastos (1991) 179–99 and Nussbaum (1999) 154–83. The law is evident in many ancient legal sources: most notably, the Twelve Tables (esp. Crawford n. 40, I. 13, source for the name *lex talionis*: "If someone break a limb, unless he make peace with him, let there be retaliation," *si membrum rupit, ni cum eo pacit, talio esto*) and the law code of Hammurabi. For comparative studies across the ancient Near East, see Barmash (2005) 154–77 and Rothkamm (2011).

41. Immanuel Kant made it central to his justification of punishment, calling it the *ius talionis* or "right of retaliation": see (1887) 194–204. Famously for Kant, this principle kept at bay the

unrealizable ideal. In its purest form, the logic of *tisis* is that the agent of an offense experiences his own harmful act as its victim.

Some applications of *ius talionis* come closer to reaching this ideal than others. Thus they may be felt to be more just. In a discussion of corrective justice, Aristotle criticizes this model of justice, which he calls “suffering in return” (τὸ ἀντιπεπονθός, *Eth. Nic.* 1132b).⁴² But Aristotle illustrates the view he is opposing with a quotation from Hesiod’s lost poem the *Great Works* (to which an anonymous commentator later added the line that comes first in the fragment) (Hes. fr. 286 MW):

εἰ κακά τις σπείραι, κακὰ κέρδεά <κ> ἀμήσειεν·
εἴ κε πάθοι τά τ’ ἔρεξε, δίκη κ’ ἰθεὶα γένοιτο.

If ever one should sow evils, he would reap evil profits.

If ever one should suffer what he has done, straight justice would be done.

This expression is a precise statement of the talionic ideal. Poetic syntactic play has captured the essence of this ideology: a single act becomes both offense and punishment. In the second line *τά* is bi-directional: by way of the compactness of expression possible with an incorporated antecedent, it signifies the things one suffers and the things one does. The context of this Hesiodic fragment is unknown, but it may have to do with judicial judgments in which talionic justice is the standard.⁴³ In this scenario, a judge is making the social world just by making it conform to the natural order of things: in a common archaic view, reciprocal, talionic justice is not a human creation but part of the fabric of the cosmos. Hesiod’s sense of the naturalism of this sort of justice comes through in the first line with the commonplace metaphor of “sowing” evil that one will reap later. These two lines, then, neatly express the atemporal and diachronic aspects of negative reciprocity. The idealized logic of retribution is that it ought to occur instantaneously and come in the form of an identical harm. But in reality, it works itself out through time and must come in the form of a substituted, similar harm. So we

“serpent-windings of utilitarianism” (195). The *ius talionis* represented for Kant a categorical imperative that any undeserved evil a wrongdoer does to another should be regarded as committed against himself.

42. On the nature of Aristotle’s criticism and his own alternative model, see Allen (2000) 282–91 for a good treatment.

43. Compare the “straight judgments” (ἰθείησι δίκησιν, Hes. *Theog.* 86) of the Zeus-nourished princes. Admittedly, the meaning of this phrase and its opposite, “crooked” (σκολιός) judgments (cf. Hes. *Op.* 219–26), is disputed: see Gagarin (1986) 1–50 and (1992) and the critique of Hammer (2002) 125.

can see that negative reciprocity inverts Bourdieu's analysis: the agents involved represent their reciprocation as synchronous and identical with the first attack, while they conceal the real temporal and qualitative differences between them. At the same time, characters and poets often represent the victims of justified revenge as ignorant of the atemporal logic of the events, as too temporally bounded to see their impending downfall.

There are many examples in archaic Greek texts that showcase these two temporal perspectives on negative reciprocity. In the first piece of extant Greek prose—ironically enough called “rather poetic” (*ποιοτικωτέροις*) by the author who preserved it because of its juridical metaphor—Anaximander, like Hesiod, represents the temporal aspects of *tisis* as part of the natural order of the cosmos (DK 12 A9):

ἐξ ὧν δὲ ἡ γένεσις ἐστι τοῖς οὖσι, καὶ τὴν φθορὰν εἰς ταῦτα γίνεσθαι
κατὰ τὸ χρεών· διδόναι γὰρ αὐτὰ δίκην καὶ τίσιν ἀλλήλοις τῆς ἀδικίας
κατὰ τὴν τοῦ χρόνου τάξιν.

And into those things from which existing things take their rise, they pass away once more, “according to just necessity; for they give justice and ret-ribution to one another for their injustices according to the ordering of time.”⁴⁴

Anaximander is discussing how the natural processes of generation and passing away can be thought of as a reciprocal exchange centered on a natural equilibrium. For a time, something comes into being, which creates a disequilibrium. Later, it perishes and the natural balance is restored. Anaximander seems to be thinking of opposites—hot and cold, for instance—in which the presence of one eliminates the other. The opposites alternate through time, presumably in an unending cycle, like the passing of day into night. The whole process is reciprocal: the opposites give to and take from “one another.” Anaximander chose to represent this diachronic, cyclic structure of the cosmos using the idea of negative reciprocity in society (*tisis*). Anaximander assumes that the social world is structured analogously.⁴⁵

44. The fragment is preserved by Simplicius (*Phys.* 24, 13). Many aspects of the interpretation of this fragment are disputed, including where the quotation begins. My interpretation and translation follow Vlastos (1947), esp. 168–74 and n. 158 on the analogies between social and cosmic *δίκη*.

45. Anaximander is preeminent among the early philosophers who, according to Vernant (1965) 215, projected onto nature the structure of the polis: see *ibid.* 202–60 and Seaford (2004) 190–98.

Solon in his *Elegy to the Muses* expresses a similar perspective on *tisis*. At the center of the poem is “the vengeance of Zeus” (Ζηνός . . . τίσις, fr. 13.25). Solon compares it with a fire or a spring wind, which have meager beginnings, yet inevitably lead to destruction (13.14–25; cf. 9.1–4; 12).⁴⁶ With these analogies, Solon makes *tisis* a part of the natural, orderly world where consequences always follow actions, where cause and effect are intimately bound together, each implying the other in a single, united whole. Werner Jaeger called this “immanent justice.”⁴⁷ Because justice—the movement of circumstances from wrong to right—is naturally and immanently present in all human endeavors, its ultimate effects are ineluctable: “justice surely comes later” (πάντως ὕστερον ἦλθε δίκη, 8).⁴⁸ *tisis* has a *telos*, a goal toward which the workings of the cosmos trend. Thus Solon can say of Zeus, the ultimate guarantor of justice, that he “looks to the end of all things” (Ζεὺς πάντων ἐφορᾷ τέλος, 17). Zeus’ synoptic view of justice stands in contrast to the way mortals perceive the pattern of *tisis*. In the present, those who do good may suffer, while those who do ill may prosper (67–70). The cosmos, therefore, may seem unjust. But this is only a temporary arrangement. *tisis* is actually working itself out diachronically. Eventually, perhaps even in the lives of future descendants, Zeus will send “ruin . . . to avenge” (ἄτη . . . τευσομένην, 75–76—note the future participle of the verb τίνω). Because of their finite abilities, mortals cannot perceive the totality of retributive justice. They can only extrapolate.⁴⁹ But a few, wise men—seers, singers, and the like (and Solon assuredly numbers himself among them)—can perceive “evil that is coming from far off” (κακὸν τηλόθεν ἐρχόμενον, 54). Solon’s words at line 25 well summarize the meaning of the poem: “such is the vengeance of Zeus” (τοιαύτη Ζηνὸς πέλεται τίσις).

46. On these similes, see Noussia (2006) 140–46. On the notion of a natural law in these examples that connects the necessary sequence of cause and effect in nature with a similar pattern of cause and effect in social life, see Jaeger (1933) 196–97 and (1960) 328–32. As Jaeger rightly sees Solonian justice, offenses against the natural order contain their own punishment. See also Blaise (2006) 119 and esp. Gagné (2013) 226–49, who has shown how the poem divides into two halves on the basis of divine perspective (in the first half) versus human (in the second half).

47. Jaeger (1960) 329.

48. Cf. 13.64, 36.3, and 4.14–16: “Justice . . . surely comes in time to avenge” (Δίκης . . . ἦ . . . τῷ δὲ χρόνῳ πάντως ἦλθ’ ἀποτεισομένη).

49. Compare Herodotus’ depiction of this Solonian wisdom when he has Solon tell Croesus “it is necessary to look at the conclusion of every matter, how it will end” (σκοπεῖν δὲ χρὴ παντὸς χρόματος τὴν τελευτὴν κῆ ἀποβήσεται, 1.32.9). In this case, Solon is imagining an external, ex post facto perspective, precisely the kind of position that is unavailable to a mortal while events are unfolding.

Anaximander's and Solon's diachronic visions of *tisis* can be contrasted with gnomic statements in the tradition of the Hesiodic fragment quoted earlier.⁵⁰ Alcman gives a particularly good example. He concludes a mythological exemplum (perhaps of the Tyndaridai's revenge upon the Hippokoöntidai) in this way (1.34–36):

] πον· ἄλαστα δὲ
φέργα πάσον κακὰ μῆσαμένοι.
ἔστι τις σιῶν **τίσις**.35

] Unforgettably
did those who plotted evil suffer.
There is a retribution of the gods.35

Alcman represents *tisis* as unforgettable, as resistant to the effect that time might have of causing past wrongs to pass away.⁵¹ Reciprocation is “of the gods,” divinely guaranteed. This fragment also contains a play with grammatical ambiguity similar to the Hesiodic one. The verb *πάσον* and the participle *μῆσαμένοι* can both be read as taking *ἄλαστα . . . φέργα . . . κακὰ* as their direct object in a kind of zeugma. The effect of this is to make the subject of the sentence both cause and suffer the very same act. Their initial harm is simultaneously their punishment. The gnome is thus an icon of the atemporal aspect of negative reciprocity.⁵²

The poet of the *Odyssey* exploits similar moments of temporal collapse involving *tisis*. These moments are akin to the privileged vision of cosmic justice Solon claims for himself in the *Elegy to the Muses*. They are apocalyptic glimpses through the veil of temporality that disguises the ultimate just order of the universe. As we shall see, prophetic (often ironic) warnings of impending *tisis* that bring the future into the present have a particularly important place in the *Odyssey*. To take one example, perhaps the most striking instance comes when Theoklymenos has a vision of the suitors’ seemingly merry feast turned into a scene of horror (20.345–58):

. . . μνηστῆρσι δὲ Παλλὰς Ἀθήνη
ἄσβεστον γέλω ὤρσε, παρέπλαγξεν δὲ νόημα.345

50. See Pind. *Nem.* 4.32; Soph. fr. 223b R. The *Oresteia* has several examples: *Ag.* 1527–29, 1560–64, *Choe.* 306–14, 930. (The last is not gnomic but fits the general pattern.)

51. On the translation of *ἄλαστα* and other forms of this adjective (esp. in *Od.* 24.423) as “unforgettably/unforgettable,” see p. 222 n. 52 later.

52. See my more extensive analysis of this passage in Loney (2011).

οἱ δ' ἤδη γναθμοῖσι γελῶων ἀλλοτρίοισιν,
αἰμοφόρυκτα δὲ δὴ κρέα ἤσθιον· ὅσσε δ' ἄρα σφέων
δακρυόφιν πίμπλαντο, γόον δ' ὤϊετο θυμός.
τοῖσι δὲ καὶ μετέειπε Θεοκλύμενος θεοειδής· 350
“ἄ δειλοί, τί κακὸν τόδε πάσχετε; νυκτὶ μὲν ὑμέων
εἰλύεται κεφαλαί τε πρόσωπά τε νέρθε τε γούνα,
οἰμωγὴ δὲ δέδηγε, δεδάκρυνται δὲ παρειαί,
αἵματι δ' ἑρράδαται τοῖχοι καλαί τε μεσόδμαι·
εἰδῶλων δὲ πλέον πρόθυρον, πλείη δὲ καὶ αὐλή, 355
ἰεμένων Ἐρεβόσδε ὑπὸ ζόφον· ἥελιος δὲ
οὐρανοῦ ἐξαπόλωλε, κακὴ δ' ἐπιδέδρομεν ἀχλὺς.”
ὥς ἔφαθ', οἱ δ' ἄρα πάντες ἐπ' αὐτῷ ἡδὺ γέλασαν.

... Among the suitors, Pallas Athena 345
made an unquenchable laughter arise and made their minds wander.
They now were laughing with jaws belonging to others
and indeed were eating blood-defiled meat. Their eyes, then,
were filling with tears, and their hearts thought of lament.
Among them then godlike Theoklymenos spoke: 350
“Ah, wretched men! What is this evil you are suffering? By night
your heads and faces and knees below have been shrouded;
wailing has flamed up; your cheeks are wet with tears;
the walls and the good crossbeams have been sprinkled with blood.
The gateway is full of ghosts, as is the court, 355
who are rushing down beneath the gloom to Erebos. The sun
has perished from the sky, and an evil mist has overrun all.”
So he spoke, but they all then sweetly laughed at him.

This passage is striking for several reasons. One of the most significant is the way the description of the vision is first begun by the narrator and then elaborated by a character. The poet does not introduce a character in whose eyes the vision of 347–49 appears—not, at least, until 350, where Theoklymenos is introduced to speak. Until then, the poet describes the scene without any clear sign that his auditors are to understand it as anything other than a description of what is actually transpiring. As strange as it seems, the suitors are simply said to be laughing with others' jaws, eating blood-defiled meat, and weeping, as other plain narrative events in the poem. Even after Theoklymenos is introduced, it remains unclear who in the room has access to this sight. Does Theoklymenos' speech show that he alone sees the suitors' normal dining as portentous, revising our first impression of 347–49? Do the suitors see it as

well?⁵³ And if they see the vision of 347–49, do they see the rest of the sight that Theoklymenos describes in 351–57? That seems unlikely, for they laugh it off, much as they do other omens of their destruction (cf. 18.342–55). But all this ambiguity about who is perceiving what underlines a sense of an atemporal reality breaking through.⁵⁴ The poem's auditors are meant to join with Theoklymenos in seeing this moment as uncanny: apparently unremarkable, familiar things are transfigured into something strange. The suitors' jaws seem dissociated from their bodies; their tears (of laughter?) become ironically tears of self-lament.⁵⁵ This vision reveals an underlying synchronous reality of the suitors' plight that, for the moment, appears more vivid and true than their diachronic experience of it: they face their punishment in the very act of committing the offense for which they will die—their reckless feasting.⁵⁶ They no longer appear as living guests, but as dead phantoms rushing down to the underworld. The horror of future retribution intrudes upon the pleasure of their wanton feast and merges with it. Theoklymenos' use of perfect tense verbs (εἰλύαται, δέδηκε, etc., concluding with ἐπιδέδρομεν) draws attention to the proximity of this apocalyptic vision to present reality.⁵⁷ It is not simply that Theoklymenos foresees the future, but the scene is presented as if the future were already a part of the present and that this fundamental unity across time is revealed for those who can see it. Offense and punishment are shown to be different sides of a single, synchronous reality.

1.5 *The Calculation of Negative Reciprocity*

The second question I posed about negative reciprocity involves calculation. In any sort of transaction, there must be a judgment about what is to be exchanged. In a reciprocal exchange, the calculation of the reciprocation is particularly important because it is felt to have a relationship with the first act. What sort of

53. See Russo in Heubeck et al. ad 20.348, who notes that the question was apparently raised already in antiquity, since the scholium to the line asserts the sight was visible only to Theoklymenos.

54. On the poet's deliberate ambiguity in such scenes, see Sels (2013), esp. 566 on this scene.

55. This is an example of the "pregnant tears" motif: see pp. 4–5.

56. Nagler (1990) 340–41 argues that Theoklymenos performs a "mantic 'reading'" and can see "the hidden nature of the suitors and their actions." Furthermore, the marked, rare language of the "blood-defiled meat" connects their feast with criminal, cannibalistic meals: see pp. 130–31, 148–49 later. For more on the thematic connections of this scene with the rest of the poem, see Bakker (2013) 93–95; Levine (1983).

57. See de Jong ad loc.

object and what amount of it should be paid back? As it is typically understood, positive reciprocal exchange emphasizes the dissimilarity between the initial gift and the reciprocating gift. (Although this is a matter of emphasis only: agents in a gift-exchange can refer to some degree of correspondence between the two items.) Negative reciprocity, on the other hand, emphasizes the similarity between the two actions, precisely because the reciprocation is not supposed to be gratuitous. In fact, the agent who demands another make a reciprocating transaction makes his demand in reference to the earlier, precipitating transaction with the expectation this second one is proportionate and qualitatively similar to the first. The proportion can take different forms, stressing to a greater or lesser degree the similarity between the transactions. In some instances, the difference in size or quality of the acts is highlighted. (This can be the case in gift-exchanges as well: for example, Diomedes' and Glaukos' exchange of armor at a ratio of 100 to 9 [*Il.* 6.235].⁵⁸) Such a difference has the effect of de-emphasizing the similarity between the two acts. On the other hand, the similarity of size and quality can be stressed. We saw already how certain poetic expressions in Alcman, Hesiod, and others collapse the temporal distinction between initial act and reciprocation in order to stress the identity of the two events. In a similar way, when speakers assert the qualitative and quantitative identity of the reciprocating transaction, they are stressing an idea of justice in which a penalty makes full and proper amends for an original harm. Early Greek texts show a range of proportions between initial harm and reciprocation, but the *Odyssey*, as we shall see, distinguishes itself by strongly stressing the equivalence, even identity between the two halves of the transaction.

For an example of the correspondence between initial harm and reciprocation that has bearing on the *Odyssey*, let us turn to perhaps the most important case of revenge in the *Iliad*—Achilles' *tisis* against Hektor. After Achilles chases Hektor around the walls of Troy three times without overtaking him, Athena intervenes and tricks Hektor. She convinces Hektor that she (whom he takes to be Deïphobos) and he should, together, “holding fast, take our stand and fight in defense” (στέωμεν καὶ ἀλεξώμεσθα μένοντες, *Il.* 22.231). The irony of her words escapes him. They will both fight, but on opposite sides. She will not defend Troy against Achilles and the Achaians; she will stand beside Achilles and help him defeat Hektor—the critical bulwark of Troy's defense. Even though Hektor believes he faces Achilles with the aid of Apollo and with Deïphobos at his side, he already

58. The episode has received extensive commentary from scholars interested in reciprocity. See especially Donlan (1989) and most recently Canevaro (2018) 37–39 with further bibliography.

perhaps suspects this duel will end in his death. Therefore, outnumbered (in reality, utterly alone), he tries to make a deal with Achilles (254–59):

ἀλλ' ἄγε δεῦρο θεοὺς ἐπιδώμεθα. τοὶ γὰρ ἄριστοι
 μάρτυροι ἔσονται καὶ ἐπίσκοποι ἁρμονιάων. 255
 οὐ γὰρ ἐγὼ σ' ἔκπαγλον ἀεικίω, αἶ κεν ἐμοὶ Ζεὺς
 δώῃ καμμονίην, σὴν δὲ ψυχὴν ἀφέλωμαι.
 ἀλλ' ἐπεὶ ἄρ κέ σε συλήσω κλυτὰ τεύχε' Ἀχιλλεῦ
 νεκρὸν Ἀχαιοῖσιν δώσω πάλιν. ὥς δὲ σὺ ῥέζεις.

*Come now, let us here give each other our gods. For they will be
 the best witness and overseers of our covenant. 255
 For I will not abuse you terribly, if ever Zeus gives
 to me steadfastness and I take your life.
 But when I strip you of the glorious armor, Achilles,
 I will give back your corpse to the Achaians. And do so yourself.*

Hektor attempts to create a reciprocal relationship with Achilles based on “giving.” The unusual expression “giving gods” is made clear in the next line to be part of an oath formula. Hektor is invoking the gods who would watch over himself to make sure he keeps the terms of the agreement. He offers to “give” them to Achilles in the sense that their role in the covenant can be thought of as overseeing Achilles’ interests.⁵⁹ The verb *ἐπιδίδωμι* would seem to imply gratuitous, reciprocal exchange. Other uses of *ἐπιδίδωμι* in Homer denote some further act of giving, in addition to an initial gesture (cf. 9.148 [= 290], 23.559). (This is the significance of the preverb *ἐπι*-.) The act Hektor has in mind here—“giving back” a corpse—is gratuitous because it extends the encounter beyond the strict exchange of violence between enemies on the battlefield. As it happens, Achilles will (eventually) decide to return the corpse of Hektor and do it in such a way that emphasizes his own, independently determined generosity: “I on my own am minded to release Hektor to you” (*νοέω δὲ καὶ αὐτὸς Ἑκτορά τοι λῦσαι*, 24.560–61).⁶⁰ Hektor uses the middle voice here—the only place the verb appears for certain in this voice—to indicate his “gift of the gods” in some way redounds

59. Richardson in Kirk et al., ad 22.254.

60. See Zanker (1998), esp. 89—though his argument differs in several details from mine. For a different interpretation of Achilles’ speech at 24.560–70, see Claus (1975). As I argued earlier (p. 27), Achilles is rejecting Priam’s insistence on the obligation to reciprocate represented by the *ἄποινα* he has given.

to himself.⁶¹ As he would give to Achilles, so would he receive from him. In other words, even as he is about to try to kill Achilles, Hektor tries to create a relationship of mutual giving and receiving. There is an irony in Hektor's gesture, however, since at this point all the gods have abandoned him. Unbeknown to him, he has no gods to give Achilles. Hektor's gift is hollow.

Whether Achilles knows this is unclear. But Athena, at least, has assured him that the divine will is firmly behind him and that Apollo, Hektor's helper for his day of glory, no longer has any influence over Zeus (24.216–23). Achilles utterly rejects Hektor's offer (22.261–72):

Ἕκτορ μή μοι ἄλαστε *συνημοσύνας* ἀγόρευε·
 ὥς οὐκ ἔστι λέουσι καὶ ἀνδράσιν *ὄρκια πιστά*,
 οὐδὲ λύκοι τε καὶ ἄρνες *ὁμόφρονα* θυμὸν ἔχουσιν,
 ἀλλὰ κακὰ φρονέουσι διαμπερές *ἀλλήλοισιν*,
 ὥς οὐκ ἔστ' ἐμέ καὶ σέ *φιλήμεναι*, οὐδέ τι νῶϊν
 265 *ὄρκια* ἔσσονται, πρὶν γ' ἢ ἕτερόν γε πεσόντα
 αἵματος ᾄσαι Ἄρηα ταλαύρινον πολέμιστήν.
 παντοίης ἀρετῆς μιμνήσκεο· νῦν σε μάλα χρῆ
 αἰχμητὴν τ' ἔμεναι καὶ θαρσαλέον πολέμιστήν.
 οὐ τοι ἔτ' ἔσθ' ὑπάλυξις, ἄφαρ δέ σε Παλλὰς Ἀθήνη
 270 ἔγχει ἐμῷ δαμάει· νῦν δ' *ἀθρόα πάντ' ἀποτίσεις*
 κήδε' ἐμῶν ἐτάρων οὓς ἔκτανες ἔγχεϊ θύων.

*Hektor, wretched one, do not speak to me of compacts.
 As there are not trustworthy oaths between lions and men,
 and as wolves and lambs do not have likeminded spirits
 but continually plot evil for one another,
 so is it impossible for you and me to have friendship, nor between us at all 265
 will there be oaths, before one of us, having fallen,
 with blood sates Ares, the warrior who bears a leather shield.
 Recall your manifold virtue. Now you surely must
 be a spearman and a bold warrior.
 There is no longer any escape for you. Soon will Pallas Athena defeat you 270
 by my spear. Now you will pay back for everything all together—
 the grief for my companions, whom you slew raging with your spear.*

Likening Hektor and himself to animals, Achilles denies they will share in positive reciprocity. Note the abundance of terms that characterize positive reciprocal

61. Aristarchus read it also at 10.463.

relationships between humans: *συνημοσύνας, ὄρκια πιστά, δμόφρονα*. Achilles even implies Hektor is requesting they engage in the intimate reciprocity of *philia* (*φιλήμεναι*, 265). Achilles both elaborates Hektor's offer and rejects it, substituting instead a negative reciprocity. This other sort of relationship, he claims, is natural both among animals, who devise evil against "one another" (*ἀλλήλοισιν*), and between the two of them. For this reason, Achilles will execute his revenge (*ἀποτίσεις*) against Hektor.

Instead of accepting Hektor's offer to "give back" his body gratuitously, Achilles demands Hektor "pay back" a calculated retributive penalty: "everything all together." The word "all" (*πάντ*) in this context is important: Achilles is demanding not simply a large penalty but a complete one, a reciprocation that compensates fully and terminates their exchange. He is asserting a calculated correspondence between what Hektor will suffer in retribution and what Hektor has done. Achilles is intent on making this transaction comprehensive and conclusive. And he has decided that killing Hektor and defiling his corpse constitute the full measure of retribution. If he were to give up the body, his vengeance would not be complete. Achilles reiterates this calculation of appropriate retribution when, after he has defeated Hektor, he rejects again Hektor's appeal to let his parents have his body (22.349–54). He refuses to engage in an ongoing relationship of exchange with Hektor (now imagined as conducted post-mortem, through his parents), but instead insists on bringing their relationship to an end. But even with Achilles' effort to make his vengeance finely calculated and conclusive, he does not easily achieve satisfactory compensation. Achilles does not make clear at what point Hektor, through the abuses suffered by his corpse, will have paid back for his offenses. The future verb *ἀποτίσεις* is vague on this point. Though Achilles tries to achieve retribution for Patroklos' death by "defiling" (*ἀείκειζεν*, 24.22) Hektor's corpse—namely, by dragging the body around Patroklos' tomb (14–18)—Apollo prevents him from accomplishing his goal: Apollo "kept away every unseemliness" (*πᾶσαν ἀεικελίην ἄπεχε*, 19), supernaturally preserving Hektor's body. In the end, Achilles will release the body before his anger is sated and his revenge has been fully achieved.⁶² Furthermore, after Achilles rejects Hektor's final plea, Hektor foretells what will come of Achilles' shameful deeds upon Hektor's body: Hektor will become "a cause of the gods' wrath" (*τι θεῶν μῆνιμα*) for Achilles, when Achilles will die at the hands of Paris and

62. Austin (2015) shows how the *Iliad* "follows Achilles through heights of insatiate grief and anger and explores the fruitlessness of vengeance to assuage grief at its roots" (160). On the fruitlessness of revenge, Austin cites 24.755–56, where Hekabe remarks that the violence done to Hektor's corpse cannot bring Patroklos back from the dead.

Apollo (22.358–60). Hektor will get a final retribution of his own against Achilles for Achilles' violence upon his corpse.⁶³

Achilles' half-line *νῦν δ' ἀθρόα πάντ' ἀποτίσεις* is echoed, virtually verbatim, in only one other place. Zeus concludes his opening speech in the *Odyssey* with this judgment about Aigisthos, who killed Agamemnon and was in his turn killed by Orestes: *νῦν δ' ἀθρόα πάντ' ἀπέτεισε* ("Now he has paid back everything all together," 1.43). The interesting difference between these two places is that, while this half-line ends Zeus' speech, Achilles includes one more line, further explaining the content of what Hektor must pay back. *ἀθρόα πάντ'* are revealed to be adjectives modifying *κῆδε'*. These "miseries" are the pains felt by Achilles for the companions he has lost to Hektor.⁶⁴ Hektor's debt has expanded beyond Achilles' initial desire for Hektor to "pay back for the despoiling" (*ἐλωπα . . . ἀποτίσῃ*, 18.93) of Patroklos. This is another sign that Achilles' effort to make Hektor pay back in full will not be borne out: as the accusation itself changes, so too do the terms on which it might be satisfied. In his statement in the opening of the *Odyssey* on Aigisthos' suffering retribution, Zeus emphasizes even more completeness and correspondence between initial harm and the response because he leaves this statement unelaborated. This is the *Odyssey's* defining case of negative reciprocity. And in it, the notion of a full and complete repayment, calibrated to answer a precipitating attack, comes to the fore.

In all cases of *tisis* in the *Odyssey*, there is a strong correspondence between offense and punishment. But the precision of the reciprocal similarity between the two acts is a matter of degree. It is possible for Zeus to offer this schematized view of justice in this example because he relates the story of Orestes' *tisis* so succinctly here and because he leaves off potentially complicating details such as the death of Thyestes. Perhaps the place in the poem where precisely appropriate punishments are most clearly stated is where Odysseus recounts in vivid detail seeing Tityos, Tantalos, and Sisyphos suffering in Hades (11.576–600). Tityos, for instance, because of his sexual transgressions against Leto, was made to have his body repeatedly assaulted by vultures and his organ of sexual desire attacked. Tantalos, as the gods' companion at a banquet, had tried to trick them into engaging in cannibalism. As a result, he is punished with a kind of anti-banquet: his thirst and hunger are heightened but never sated by the presence of water and fruit that forever recede from his reach. Sisyphos had attempted to cheat death and

63. See Richardson in Kirk et al. ad loc. Cf. Apollo's anger at 24.50–54. See de Jong (2012) 18, however, for a different interpretation: Achilles' eventually releasing the body "would seem to absolve him from all blame."

64. As noted by de Jong (2012) ad loc., *ἐμῶν ἐτάρων* should be read as an objective genitive: cf. *Od.* 22.254.

thus move up from Hades contrary to the cosmic order for mortals. He is made to push a stone up a hill in endless, painful repetitions of the movement by which he offended the gods. Sisyphos' punishment therefore symbolically fits his crime by confirming him in a painful version of the act for eternity.⁶⁵ The attention paid to the particular details of the sufferings of Tityos, Tantalos, and Sisyphos underscores their appropriateness.⁶⁶ These criminals, along with Aigisthos, are paradigmatic illustrations of symmetrical, talionic punishment—an ideal that can be approached most closely in only the fantastical conditions of eschatological judgment in Hades or the highly selective retelling of Orestes' *tisis* that Zeus gives. Rhetoric is of great importance here. Paradoxically, the precise calculation of symmetrical harm trades on an unspoken imprecision in other respects. When a speaker applies the *lex talionis* he must elide or obfuscate certain facts that would point toward dissimilarity between an offense and its punishment in order to emphasize or recharacterize other facts that would point to similarity.⁶⁷ The talionic principle, even as it is subjectively construed in practice, is the reference point for the concept of punishment embedded in *tisis*.

For a final example, let us consider the evidence from Gortyn again. There is little doubt that payment of a penalty is the core meaning of the various cognates of *tisis* in the early Cretan inscriptions. As the Gortyn law code and other inscriptions attest, determining the value of a penalty to be paid for harm was an important topic in these texts. Some of the values are arbitrary: a certain value was set by convention (e.g., 100 staters for adultery with a free woman: *IC IV.72 col. II.20–27*), and then factors such as social status or the location of the crime made for relative adjustments to that penalty (e.g., only one half the penalty if adultery occurred outside the woman's home; but twice as much if the man was a slave). Other penalties are reckoned according to the actual value of harm done, as in the case of many of the kinds of unlawful seizures of property. In certain contexts, some aggravating factor is cited that leads to a greater penalty. As in the case just cited of a slave seducing a free woman, there is a common formulaic expression to indicate this greater severity and penal obligation: they are to pay "double" (*διπλεῖ*). This sort of concern about determining the size and quality of a wrongdoer's punitive obligation is consistent with the way agents of *tisis* in

65. On these punishments, see Sourvinou-Inwood (1986) esp. 38 on Tityos, 46 on Tantalos, and 52 on Sisyphos. Only the crime of Tityos is mentioned explicitly, but the crimes of all three appear to be well known in the tradition.

66. On the vividness of the scene, see Gazis (2018) 204–5.

67. See helpful discussion of Nussbaum (1999) 158: "The retributive idea is committed to a certain sort of neglect of the particulars."

Homer are at pains to calculate the revenge they will exact. These legal texts, however, fill this function impartially. In Homer, there are no law codes. It is always up to the interested participants themselves to calculate their *tisis*.

1.6 *The Judge of Negative Reciprocity*

The third question I posed about negative reciprocity arises from considering how and, more importantly, by whom such calculations are made. Earlier, I mentioned how the principle of *ius talionis*, as Kant understood it, rests on the idea that the ideal form of justice consists in having a wrongdoer suffer the very same offense he committed against another. This ideal is ultimately unobtainable, though certain poetic expressions reproduce this ideal in a concrete way. Since perfect identity of wrong and punishment is impossible, any attempt to produce justice on this basis is a fiction. Though some advocates of *ius talionis* have valued it for its apparent naturalness and objectivity, the clearer-eyed among them have recognized that it requires a calculation of what reciprocation is equivalent to the initial wrong. Kant understood this point. “The equalization of punishment with crime is therefore only possible by the cognition of the judge.”⁶⁸ This only raises the question of who gets to be the judge and exercise his or her “cognition.” For Kant this was clear enough: the state and the judges it appoints. But without state structures, in the Homeric world, where self-help was the main (if not the only) mode of enforcement, it is up to individual agents to decide how to apply this law. It is not hard to see how, even with Kant’s disinterested judge, the act of applying the law would be based on subjective judgments. The result is that the hero who is attempting to apply this law to his own situation will always coordinate the likeness of crime and punishment in a way that benefits him.

There is a further point about the role of agents that must be stressed. *tisis* is a way of looking at the world, of structuring the experience of events. Such ways of seeing are not objectively intrinsic to the world itself but structures that agents impose upon it. In this way, it is up to the agents involved in a scenario to determine whether they and the other participants are avengers, unjust victims of an assault, aggressors—or just foes contesting over a prize. The last option seemed, at first, to be the case in my opening example of Euphorbos’ and Menelaos’ fight. Only once Euphorbos chose to reframe the encounter as revenge for his brother did he invoke the ideology of payback (*Il.* 17.34, *τείσεις*). Sometimes factors beyond the control of agents frustrate attempts at framing a scenario as *tisis*. Achilles, for instance, when he realizes that Apollo has deceived him into letting the Trojans

68. Kant (1887) 198.

retreat safely within their walls, declares he “would take vengeance” (τισαίμην, 22.20) upon Apollo. But he recognizes that he, only a mortal, does not have “the power” (δύναμις, 20) to do so. Therefore, Apollo, as a god, “does not fear vengeance in the future” (οὐ τι τίσιν γ’ ἔδεισας ὀπίσσω, 19). Try as Achilles may, he cannot make his encounter with Apollo into a scenario of revenge. He cannot force Apollo to play the part of punished transgressor. This illustrates how the brute facts of reality—the power differentials among agents—constrain possibilities. Frequently, it is the stronger that decides whether an encounter is a *tisis* scenario or not.

There are other points in the *Iliad* where agents calibrate what counts as just, equivalent reciprocation in such a way as suits them or construe ambiguous events as parts of a revenge narrative. In Book 13, for instance, after Idomeneus kills the Trojan Asios (13.384–93), another Trojan, Deïphobos, kills the Greek Hypsenor and claims that, as a result, Asios is not “unavenged” (ἄτιτος, 414). Deïphobos claims a life for a life, but not of the one who actually committed the transgression.⁶⁹ No doubt, this is because he tried and failed to kill Idomeneus, missing him with his spear throw and hitting and killing Hypsenor instead (402–10). So, after the fact, Deïphobos both converts his slaying of Hypsenor from an accident into revenge and counts the killing of this uninvolved person as a proper reciprocation. Shortly after this, Idomeneus kills one more Trojan, Alkathōōs (427–45), and then claims that he and the Greeks have in fact killed “three in exchange for one” (τρῆϊς ἐνὸς ἀντὶ, 447).⁷⁰ Idomeneus is including not only the Trojan killed directly in response to Hypsenor’s death—Alkathōōs—but also two other Trojans he and Antilochos had earlier killed: Asios and Othryoneus (363–73). In this way, Idomeneus construes his revenge for Hypsenor not only on the basis of a three-to-one ratio, but confounds the temporal sequence of the action and takes two earlier deaths as actually reciprocating for a later one.

On another occasion, in Book 11, after Agamemnon has defeated the brothers Peisandros and Hippolochos, they supplicate him and ask that they be allowed to live in exchange for material compensation (11.130–37). Agamemnon rejects their pleas. He says their father, Antimachos, had advised that the Trojans kill Menelaos and Odysseus when they were visiting on an embassy to Troy (138–41). For this “unseemly outrage” the brothers “will pay” (ἀεικέα τίσετε λώβην, 142), and so he kills them. Agamemnon thus constructs a *tisis* scenario in which he executes a revenge that reciprocates with death the outrage of a suggested—but not

69. See Fenno (2008) 152–53 on such indirect vengeance on the battlefield in the *Iliad*.

70. The language of *tisis* is not used here explicitly, but the terminology of “in return for” (ἀντὶ) is typical of such scenarios, and I take it to invoke the notion of revenge in this context.

accomplished—breach in conventions regarding the safety of ambassadors. This would seem rather far removed from a simple equivalence. There is just enough of an analogy, perhaps, between the situation in the embassy and the present encounter to make the *tisis* plausible: two warriors (Peisandros and Hippolochos/Menelaos and Odysseus) are pleading for the return of a captive (themselves/Helen), and in both cases the one petitioned (Agamemnon/Antimachos) demands the death of the petitioner. Antimachos, being just one Trojan among many, cannot take that course of action; however, Agamemnon, the only one with any control over the present situation, can, and he makes death a fitting requital for a father's "outrage." It has been pointed out that Agamemnon's story about the plot to kill his brother and Odysseus does not seem to match what the narrator reports.⁷¹ We are told Antimachos accepted a bribe from Paris to prevent Helen from being returned (presumably, by arguing in a council, as at 139, against that proposal) (123–25). There is no mention of murder.⁷² I suspect Agamemnon is inventing the charge—or, at least, conveniently misremembering Antimachos' counsel—in order to bring Antimachos' offense nearer to an appropriate, reciprocal justification for killing his sons. In other words, he fabricates it in order to make the sons more liable to suffer *tisis*.

Achilles' rejection of Lykaon's supplication (21.34–135) is also an instructive example of an agent who, by virtue of his unassailable position of superior physical force, is able to construe what counts as justice as he sees fit. With Lykaon at the mercy of Achilles, he pleads for his life not on the basis of ransom and reciprocation—in fact, he never uses the word ἄποινα, "ransom," the characteristic term (cognate with *tisis*) for negative reciprocity that a victim may use to avoid suffering death. He instead speaks of "shame" (αἰδείο) and "pity" (ἐλέησον, 74), perhaps knowing that Achilles would calculate his reciprocation for the death of Patroklos at nothing short of his own death. It is Achilles who turns the confrontation into *tisis*. Somewhat incongruously, he claims to reject Lykaon's offer of "ransom" (ἄποινα, 99). Achilles' conception of *tisis* seems to have changed since the outset of the war (and it will change again in his final interview with

71. On the discrepancy and Agamemnon's manipulation of events, see Hainsworth in Kirk et al., ad 11.124, Wilson (2002) 169, Robbins (1990) 13. Kelly (2014) 155 seems to think Agamemnon is not manipulating events, since he needs no justification to kill Trojans. But if this were so, why bring up the charge at all?

72. Proclus' summary of the *Cypria* includes the embassy without mention of the proposed murder (*Chrestom.* 152–54), but being so succinct, this absence does not prove it was not a part of the embassy. Apollodorus' summary does include it in his version of the embassy (*Epit.* 3.28a), and M. L. West (2013) 116–17 assumes the murder plot was part of the *Cypria*. In any case, other attestations of the murder plot during the embassy may have come from later readers' and auditors' taking Agamemnon at his word in *Iliad* 11.

Priam). He used to calculate his reciprocation differently, but now with the death of Patroklos, nothing short of the death of “all” (πάντες, 133) the Trojans will be satisfying (100–35).⁷³

The locus classicus for any discussion of the roles of agents in determining what is transacted in a negative reciprocal exchange is the scene of a homicide dispute on the shield of Achilles (*Il.* 18.497–508):

λαοὶ δ' εἰν ἀγορῇ ἔσαν ἀθρόοι· ἔνθα δὲ νεῖκος
 ὠρώρει, δύο δ' ἄνδρες ἐνείκεον **εἵνεκα ποινηῆς**
 ἀνδρὸς ἀποφθιμένου· ὃ μὲν εὔχετο **πάντ'** ἀποδοῦναι
 δῆμῳ πιφαύσκων, ὃ δ' ἀνάνητο μηδὲν ἐλέσθαι. 500
 ἄμφω δ' ἰέσθην ἐπὶ ἵστορι **πεῖραρ** ἐλέσθαι.
 λαοὶ δ' ἀμφοτέροισιν ἐπήπνυν ἀμφὶς ἀρωγοί·
 κήρυκες δ' ἄρα λαὸν ἐρήτυον· οἳ δὲ γέροντες
 εἶατ' ἐπὶ ξεστοῖσι λίθοις ἱερῶ ἐνὶ κύκλῳ,
 σκῆπτρα δὲ κηρύκων ἐν χέρσ' ἔχον ἡεροφώνων. 505
 τοῖσιν ἔπειτ' ἦϊσσον, ἀμοιβηδὶς δὲ δίκάζον.
 κεῖτο δ' ἄρ' ἐν μέσσοισι δύο χρυσοῖο τάλαντα,
 τῷ δόμεν ὃς μετὰ τοῖσι δίκην ἰθύντατα εἴποι.

*The people were together in the agora. There, a dispute
 had arisen. Two men were quarrelling over a penalty
 for a man who had died. The one was asserting [the right?] to give back all,
 declaring it to the people. The other was refusing to take anything. 500
 Both wished to obtain the limit through the arbiter.
 The people, split as partisans, were exclaiming for each side.
 Heralds then were restraining the people. The elders
 were sitting on polished benches in a sacred circle,
 and they were holding the scepter of the loud-voiced heralds. 505
 To these men, then, they were rushing, and they were judging in turn.
 There lay in the middle two talents of gold
 to give to him who among them should speak the straightest judgment.*

First of all, it is important to observe that this scene is doubly balanced as a kind of diptych within a diptych. It is set against the marriage scene (491–96), with which it together forms the picture of the city at peace. This is counterpoised by the image of the city at war (509–40). The law case scene, then, is part of the peaceful city—an alternative reality to the brutal conditions of the *Iliad*.

73. On such battlefield supplication scenes, see Kelly (2014), with further bibliography.

Oliver Taplin writes, “Here is no vendetta or the perilous exile which Homer and his audience associated with a murderer in the age of heroes. We have, rather, arbitrators, speeches on both sides, and considered judgements.”⁷⁴ In both Homeric epics, we have plenty of disputes that arise from one party perceiving an outrage or a harm to themselves or someone close to them—not least of all, because of a death. None of these cases of killing, however, is resolved by payment of a penalty of material compensation. There are two possible exceptions: this scene on the shield and a scenario that Aias proposes to Achilles as an alternative to his intransigence in the face of Agamemnon’s offer (*Il.* 9.632–36).

In this second example, Aias says a kinsman may “accept . . . a penalty” (*ποινήν* . . . ἐδέξατο, *Il.* 9.633) from the killer, who “pays back a great deal” (*πόλλ’ ἀποτίσας*, 634). As a result, the kinsman is placated and the killer remains in the community. But, as with the shield scene, it is important to note that this scenario is not an actual part of the events of the war. It is only a hypothetical alternative. In fact, Aias fails to persuade Achilles, and such a scenario is not realized. (Among the several reasons Aias fails, one reason—to return to the previous point on correspondence between offense and penalty—is that Achilles seeks a complete, “entire” recompense for Agamemnon’s insult, not merely the “great quantity” [*πόλλ’*] to which Aias alludes.⁷⁵) Both this scene and the scene on the shield, then, do not depict how such an exchange actually happens in the narrative of the poems, but hold forth *comparanda* in order to show precisely what is *not* happening in this poem of war.

Many details of the shield scene are debated. The most significant point of contention is over the meaning of 498–500. Is this scene a dispute of fact, over whether or not the first litigant has paid an agreed upon penalty in full? Or is this a dispute of rights, over whether the second litigant is obligated to accept the payment and forego retribution?⁷⁶ There is no need to go back over this scholarly debate again. I follow the latter interpretation, which has found general (but not unanimous) acceptance. A few points about this passage are worth stressing. First, lines 498–500 give us two litigants locked in an unresolvable dispute. The

74. Taplin (1980) 6.

75. Achilles’ well-known response to the grand catalogue of Agamemnon’s gifts is that he will not relent until Agamemnon “gives me back the entire heart-paining outrage” (*ἀπὸ πᾶσαν ἐμοὶ δόμεναι θυμαλγέα λώβην*, 9.387).

76. For an overview, see Edwards 213–18 in Kirk et al. To this may be added Cantarella (2001) 476–79, arguing for the “factual” interpretation; Elmer (2013) 182–87 (with further bibliography), arguing for the “rights” interpretation. A key point of the debate is whether *ἀποδοῦναι* should be understood as temporal (and so about the facts of the case) or aspectual (and so about the rights of the first litigant to satisfy the second with material compensation).

first asserts he will pay material compensation as a penalty; the second refuses to accept any such payment (and evidently demands violent retribution—though this is unstated). In this context, the phrase *εἵνεκα ποινῆς* may be misunderstood. Most interpreters assume it means “about a blood-price,” payment of material compensation for the homicide. But *ποινή* need not necessarily refer to payment of material compensation. For instance, Patroklos in his *aristeia* exacts *ποινή* by killing Trojans: “rushing among them, he killed them and took retribution for many” (*κτείνει μεταΐσσων, πολέων δ’ ἀπετίνυτο ποινήν*, *Il.* 16.397). There are other examples.⁷⁷ The sense of *εἵνεκα ποινῆς* may rather be that the conflict is “about *ποινή*,” as in, what counts as *ποινή*. Will it be violent or economic?⁷⁸

Second, as presented, the claims of the two litigants are incommensurable. This picture of intractability only changes with lines 501 and following, when a method of arbitration is introduced. How exactly the dispute is resolved is unclear, and different arrangements have been proposed.⁷⁹ On any plausible view, it will happen because third parties—whether the “elders” (*γέροντες*), the “people” (*λαοί*), or the “arbiter” (*ἵστωρ*)—have decided what constitutes a just exchange, a “straightest judgment” (*δίκην ἰθύντατα*). (It should be noted that it is left unclear whether it will be resolved—though, if this is truly an ideal alternative to the Iliadic reality, we would expect a peaceful resolution.⁸⁰) There are other examples in early Greek texts of similar settlement procedures—in Hesiod, for instance—though few deal explicitly with homicide, the typical cause of a demand for *ποινή*.⁸¹ The most important early homicide law—Draco’s law (*IG I³.104*), dating

77. Achilles picks out twelve Trojan youths to burn alive as “retribution for Patroklos” (*ποινήν Πατρόκλοιο*, 21.28); Akamas takes “retribution for his brother” (*κασιγνήτοιο γέ ποινή*, 14.483) by killing Promachos; Odysseus took “retribution for his stout companions” (*ποινήν ἰφθίμων ἐτάρων*, *Od.* 23.312–13) by blinding Polyphemos. One might object that these are examples only of *ποινή* outside a community. But there is only one example (apart from the shield scene) of *ποινή* of any kind within a community: the hypothetical alternative Aias puts to Achilles (*Il.* 9.632–36). The fact that killers of members of a community do go into exile in order to avoid retaliation indicates violent retribution within a community is at least possible, if usually avoided: e.g., Theoklymenos, who killed a “kinsman” (*ἔμφυλον*, *Od.* 15.273) and is fleeing his “homeland” (*πατρίδος*, 272), Argos, “lest [the relatives] kill me” (*μή με κατακτείνωσι*, 278).

78. The violent outcome need not imply capital punishment. More likely, such an outcome would mean the first litigant loses his right to be secure from injury and thus has to flee into exile in order to avoid death. Cf. the case of Theoklymenos in the previous note.

79. See Elmer (2013) 185, 269–70 n. 24, who points out that there seems to be two stages involved, proposed settlements and then a judgment on which settlement is best.

80. Muellner (1976) 105–106 stresses that the scene—especially because of the syntax of line 500—is left deliberately unresolved; Elmer (2013) 129–30 stresses the intransigence of the second litigant, who will “never” accept compensation.

81. See Gagarin (1986) 19–50, 86–89.

from around 620 B.C.—sets out a procedure for settling the case before various officials: “the princes” (οἱ βασιλεῖς), “the judges” (οἱ ἐφῆται). Under their guidance, the family of the victim may “pardon” (αἰδέσασθαι) the killer (presumably for material compensation). This is precisely the sort of mediated settlement to a dispute about retribution that does not occur in the *Odyssey*.

Third, the term πᾶντ’ deserves special attention, though it is often overlooked. As in the case of Achilles’ rejection of Hektor’s proposal at 22.271, this word emphasizes the completeness of the recompense. The litigant is claiming that his payment will establish a full, completely satisfactory exchange—in effect, asserting the equivalent value between the goods he is offering and the life of the dead man. The second litigant is refusing to accept this equivalence. In line 501 the conflict is described in different terms: both are trying “to obtain the limit” (πεῖραρ ἐλέσθαι)—that is, to have the limit on the penalty set in their favor as either material compensation or as violent revenge. πεῖραρ in this sense defines “the end” of how far such a penalty must go in order to achieve satisfactory, equivalent compensation. There is an irony here as well, as David Elmer points out: the “end” the parties are trying to achieve is also an end to their conflict, which they struggle to set at different points. This parallels the problems posed by Achilles’ potentially endless pursuit of vengeance.⁸²

This scene stands in marked contrast to how matters actually work out in disputes over vengeance in the Homeric poems, and in the *Odyssey* especially. Third parties of any sort are rarely involved. And when they are—the embassy scene in *Iliad* 9, the assembly scenes in Books 2 and 24 of the *Odyssey*—they fail to bring about a mutually satisfactory conclusion that will steer clear of violence. In the *Odyssey* in particular, the problem of not having such an arbiter comes to the fore. As we shall see, without having a neutral party involved in determining what constitutes a just exchange, the individual disputants can set recompense at whatever value, in whatever form, they are able to impose. Aias’ hypothetical scenario is useful, once again, to illustrate the point. The payment of ποινή in that scenario is only successful if the aggrieved party lets himself be placated. There is no external constraint that obligates him. He must agree to the value proposed. If he does not—as Achilles does not—the conflict will continue.

1.7 Conclusion: Beyond Reciprocity

In this chapter, I have outlined the main features of the diction and ideology of *tisis* as it appears in an archaic Greek context. *tisis* is a kind of negative reciprocity,

82. Elmer (2013) 186: “By explicitly posing the problem of limits, the shield description gestures unmistakably toward the poem’s ultimate closural strategy.”

an exchange of harm for harm. Crucial to negative reciprocity is the coordination of initial attack and later reciprocation. The more the reciprocation is like the initial attack and the closer in time it comes, the more just the outcome is felt to be. The (unrealizable) ideal is for the offender to suffer himself the very attack he commits at the same moment he commits it: to harm himself. With a brief glimpse at Theoklymenos' vision, we already have seen how the poet of the *Odyssey* manipulates the representation of time, of cause and effect in order to bring the suitors' punishment and offense closer together. However, any punishment will necessarily be different from the offense it reciprocates. Their equivalence must be a fiction. The texts in this chapter reveal an interest in how and by whom the equivalence will be calculated. In the *Odyssey*, this interest in calculation is strongly emphasized. Unlike historical legal texts, the *Odyssey* has no impartial arbiters or procedures that can determine what constitutes a just exchange of harm for harm. As we shall see, this is a key feature of how *tisis* works in the *Odyssey* and drives the epic's plot.

It is also true that, however much we might learn from using the lens of negative reciprocity to understand *tisis*, other analytical tools should also be brought to bear when studying as complex and nuanced a narrative poem as the *Odyssey*. The three dimensions of *tisis* that I have underscored—temporality, agency, calculation/definition—remain important. But in the *Odyssey*, these features are shaped by and accommodated to the way the story of the poem unfolds—they are narrativized, so to speak. This is only to be expected: wherever we find the principles of negative reciprocity being applied in any specific case, they take on a narrative shape. We have already seen some examples of this narrativization of the principles of negative reciprocity, principally in the *Iliad*. Lyric poetry might provide us with more examples, given the typical way gnomic passages are juxtaposed with mythic exempla. For instance, the gnomic lines that I cited earlier from Alcman's *Partheneion* follow on lines that relate a story that exemplifies the sentiment: Tyndareus and his sons took revenge upon Hippokoön and his sons for their usurpation of the rule of Sparta. In the *Odyssey*, this need for narrative form is even more pronounced. As we shall see, the *Odyssey* articulates its own particular narrative vision of *tisis*.

Vengeance in the Odyssey: tisis as Narrative

*This retribution, which has a geometric rigor, which punishes
automatically the abuse of force, was the leading subject of
reflection by the Greeks. It constitutes the soul of the epic . . .*

—SIMONE WEIL

THE *ODYSSEY* TAKES the framework of negative reciprocity apparent in other early Greek texts and gives it a rich narrative form. The three principal features of negative reciprocity analyzed in the last chapter remain true of *tisis* in the *Odyssey*. However, as we shall see, these aspects of *tisis*, which are shared widely among early Greek texts, are only the starting point for the *Odyssey*'s more particular vision of *tisis*. Against the wider background of archaic Greek ideology, *tisis* in the *Odyssey* stands out, especially with its strong emphasis on the equivalence—sometimes becoming even an identity—of precipitating harm and reciprocating punishment. Furthermore, these ideological aspects of *tisis* come to have a narrative shape. As we shall see in later chapters, with *tisis* constructed as a narrative, the different instances of *tisis* in the poem overlap and implicate one another in such a way as to introduce a degree of irony and ethical complexity not seen in other early Greek stories of vengeance.

First, I argue that *tisis* is a central feature of the *Odyssey*'s structure and ideology. The poet's choice to begin the poem where he does, with Zeus' programmatic speech on the *tisis* of Orestes, underscores this point. This case of Orestes is a defining example that shapes our interpretation of all subsequent cases of *tisis* in the epic.

2.1 *The Centrality of Vengeance*

The epigraph to this chapter comes from Simone Weil's well-known essay on the *Iliad*, "The *Iliad* or the Poem of Force" (*L'Iliade ou le poème de la force*).¹ The *Odyssey*, unlike the *Iliad*, is not an epic of war. But this same violence runs through the heart of the poem, now more closely linked to acts of vengeance. In this chapter, I argue that we can see a counterpart in the *Odyssey* to the *Iliad*'s program of *mēnis*. In the *Iliad*, *mēnis* is an unstable hatred whose reasons and objects can readily slip.² This parallels, but is also distinguished from, the *Odyssey*'s *tisis*—a precisely calculated "retribution"; or, at least, this precisely "appropriate" retaliation is the ideological framework for many acts and stories of violence in the poem, as we saw in the last chapter. In truth, *tisis* in the *Odyssey* is far less stable and free from manipulation than its champions claim. But *tisis*, in its apparent simplicity and, more importantly, in all its real contortions, is central to the structure and meaning of the poem.

The *Odyssey*, like its protagonist, bends and swerves. Where and how its narrative action begins in earnest (after a full 27 lines) is significant. The poet entertains and rejects several alternative points of origin. Each of these alternatives would have made for a different emphasis, but the actual narrative beginning—Zeus' speech in a divine council (1.28–43)—makes revenge and the hermeneutics involved in this paradigmatic example central to the plan of the poem from the outset. The first lines of the poem are well known, and they are evasive (1.1–27):

Ἄνδρα μοι ἔννεπε, Μοῦσα, πολύτροπον, ὃς μάλα πολλὰ
 πλάγχθη, ἐπεὶ Τροίης ἱερὸν πτολίεθρον ἔπερσε.
 πολλῶν δ' ἀνθρώπων ἴδεν ἄστεα καὶ νόον ἔγνω,
 πολλὰ δ' ὃ γ' ἐν πόντῳ πάθεν ἄλγεα ὃν κατὰ θυμόν,
 ἀρνύμενος ἣν τε ψυχὴν καὶ νόστον ἐταίρων. 5
 ἀλλ' οὐδ' ὧς ἐτάρους ἐρρύσατο, ἰέμενός περ·
 αὐτῶν γὰρ σφετέρῃσιν ἀτασθαλίῃσιν ὄλοντο,
 νήπιοι, οἳ κατὰ βούς Ὑπερίονος Ἥελίοιο
 ἥσθιον· αὐτὰρ ὁ τοῖσιν ἀφείλετο νόστιμον ἦμαρ.
 τῶν ἀμόθεν γε, θεά, θύγατερ Διός, εἰπὲ καὶ ἡμῖν. 10
 ἐνθ' ἄλλοι μὲν πάντες, ὅσοι φύγον αἰπὺν ὄλεθρον,

1. Weil (1953) 22.

2. The important example of an unstable *mēnis* is Achilles' anger. On the topic, see esp. Taplin (1992) 193–202. As Harris (2001) 131 remarks: "the hero's rage, first against Agamemnon, later against the Trojan prince Hector, gives the poem its principal structure." For a different view, see Konstan (2006) 49–55, Austin (2015) 156.

οἴκοι ἔσαν, πόλεμόν τε πεφρυγότες ἦδὲ θάλασσαν·
 τὸν δ' οἶον, νόστου κεχρημένον ἦδὲ γυναικός,
 νύμφη πότνι ἔρυκε Καλυψώ, δῖα θεάων,
 ἐν σπέεσι γλαφυροῖσι, λιλαιομένη πόσιν εἶναι. 15
 ἀλλ' ὅτε δὴ ἔτος ἦλθε περιπλομένων ἐνιαυτῶν,
 τῷ οἱ ἐπεκλώσαντο θεοὶ οἰκόνδε νέεσθαι
 εἰς Ἰθάκην, οὐδ' ἔνθα πεφυγμένος ἦεν ἀέθλων
 καὶ μετὰ οἷσι φίλοισι· θεοὶ δ' ἐλέαιρον ἅπαντες 20
 νόσφι Ποσειδάωνος· ὁ δ' ἀσπερχὲς μενέαινε
 ἀντιθέω Ὀδυσσῇ πάρος ἦν γαίαν ἰκέσθαι.
 ἀλλ' ὁ μὲν Αἰθίοπας μετεκίαθε τηλόθ' ἐόντας,
 Αἰθίοπας, τοὶ διχθὰ δεδαΐαται, ἔσχατοι ἀνδρῶν,
 οἱ μὲν δυσομένου Ὑπερίονος, οἱ δ' ἀνιόντος, 25
 ἀντιῶν ταύρων τε καὶ ἀρνεῖων ἐκατόμβης.
 ἔνθ' ὅ γε τέρπετο δαιτὶ παρήμενος· οἱ δὲ δὴ ἄλλοι
 Ζηνὸς ἐνὶ μεγάροισιν Ὀλυμπίου ἀθρόοι ἦσαν.

*Tell me, Muse, of the man of many turns, who
 was driven far after he sacked the sacred citadel of Troy.
 Many cities of men he saw and learned of their minds.
 Many pains he suffered in his heart upon the sea,
 striving to save his life and the homecoming of his companions. 5
 But even so he could not protect his companions, though he longed to.
 For they perished by their own recklessness—
 fools—who ate the cattle of Hyperion Helios.
 So he took from them the day of their return.
 Of these things, from some point, goddess, daughter of Zeus, speak also to us. 10
 Then, all the others, as many as had escaped sheer destruction,
 were at home, having escaped war and the sea.
 But him alone, who longed for his homecoming and wife,
 was the nymph queen Calypso, divine of the goddesses, detaining
 in hollow caves, desiring that he be her husband. 15
 But when indeed the year came, as the seasons revolved,
 in which the gods spun out for him to return home
 to Ithaca—not even there did he escape ordeals
 even among his own people—all the gods pitied him,
 save Poseidon. He was ceaselessly angry 20
 with god-like Odysseus until he should reach his own land.
 But Poseidon was visiting the far-off Aethiopians—
 the Aethiopians who are divided in two, the farthest away of humans,*

*some of them where Hyperion sets, others where he rises.
 He had gone there to receive a hecatomb of bulls and rams. 25
 There, he was taking delight, sitting at a feast. The rest of the gods
 were gathered together in the halls of Olympian Zeus.*

The proem (1.1–10) first selects the subject matter from the wider traditions about the Trojan War that this poem will narrate—Odysseus and his fraught return from Troy. (The way the proem identifies this subject matter, even in the very first word of the poem, is already evasive, as numerous commentators have noted.³) Even as the proem provides this general outline of the poem's subject matter, the poet is already emphasizing the one episode in Odysseus' wandering in which considerations of revenge are most pronounced: the companions' deaths for their killing the cattle of Helios. By devoting fully half the proem (five of ten lines, from *καὶ νόστον* [5] to *νόστιμον ἡμᾶρ* [9]) to the deaths of the companions and, even more strikingly, citing specifically the instance in which the companions are most plainly made the culpable targets of *tisis*, the poet displays his concern for revenge. The proem, in addition, calls upon the Muse to initiate the narrative at one moment in this string of events—every beginning, after all, must begin at some one point: "Of these things, from some point, goddess, daughter of Zeus, speak also to us" (10). The invitation, however, is vague—"from some point"—and the Muse does not specify where the narrative is to begin for several verses yet. There are a number of false starts.

Although Odysseus has already been indicated (though not yet named) as the principal actor and subject, the poem swerves to allude to the other Achaeans safe at home (11–12). The audience, steeped in the tradition of return stories, would think of Nestor and Menelaos, among others. (And they will not be disappointed in their expectation of meeting these characters and hearing their return stories, since they will appear in Books 3 and 4.) But this is still not a proper beginning. These other heroes are alluded to in such a way as not to displace Odysseus as the center of attention: "Then all the others . . . were at home" (*ἐνθ' ἄλλοι μὲν πάντες . . . οἴκοι ἔσαν*). *ἄλλοι μὲν* implies another subject and agent of the narrative. The epic will not begin, then, with a catalogue of the returns of the other Achaeans who had happy return stories.

The poem returns to Odysseus, contrasting his plight with the others who returned safely: "But him alone" (*τὸν δ' οἶον*, 13) Calypso was keeping from his

3. The evasive, periphrastic quality of these lines has been seen variously as artful—e.g., Rüter (1969) 34–48—or careless—e.g., von Wilamowitz-Moellendorf (1884) 16. The discussion is at least as old as Bekker (1863) 99, who remarked on the "riddling" (*räthselhaft*) quality of the opening. See also Kahane (1992), Walsh (1995), Pucci (1998) 11–29.

home. The narrative could have begun here, with Odysseus on Ogygia, pining for Ithaca. This is not a narrative event, however; it is a state—a state that could have continued forever with Odysseus made Calypso's immortal consort. Further specification is required. A few lines later, therefore, with an adversative ἀλλά, the poem indicates a particular moment when the narrative will begin in this otherwise cyclic, endless condition (16–18): “But when, then, the year came as the seasons revolved in which the gods ordained for him to return home to Ithaca . . .” But even this is something of a misdirection. (Although, again, the poem will not disappoint completely; Book 5 will pick up here.) Just when a location and moment seem to be prepared for the narrative to begin, the focus changes once again. Poseidon appears (20), and the poet introduces his stay among the Aethiopians, again with an adversative ἀλλά (22). But this trip does not become the real focus of action either. Poseidon's trip remains in the background. As with the ἄλλοι μὲν of 11 answered by the τὸν δ' of 13, the δὲ μὲν of 22 leaves the audience expecting some other agent to come into focus. This expectation is finally satisfied with the οἱ δέ of 26. The other assembled Olympians are the characters with whom the narrative proper begins, when Zeus “began to address them” (τοῖσι δὲ μύθων ἤρχε, 28). His address (28–43) constitutes the first genuine action of the poem and the first direct speech.

With all these twists and turns over where and how to begin the narrative, the poet's choice to begin with this speech underscores the significance of its subject matter and how it will relate to the rest of the poem.⁴ In his address, Zeus is responding to mortal complaints of divine injustice. The substance of his reply is an appeal to a story of retribution—Orestes' *tisis* against Aigisthos. This topic is remarkable because, in the first place, it has nothing to do with the plot of the *Odyssey*. This allusion to a subordinate, parallel story corresponds to two passages in the final book of the poem. In the second *nekuia*, the poet revisits the “Oresteia” myth (24.19–34, 95–97, 199–202), with the shade of Agamemnon explicitly contrasting his own disastrous fate with Odysseus' (192–202). This is the final in a series of allusions to this parallel myth that serve to evoke considerations of revenge throughout the poem.⁵ In a similar fashion, a series of divine council

4. On the importance of the Muse's choice of this starting point, see Clay (1983) 39–53, who draws a different conclusion than mine.

5. 1.28–43, 1.298–300, 3.193–312, 4.512–47, 11.385–464, 13.382–85, 24.19–34, 95–97, 199–202. In this book, I refer to the story of Orestes' *tisis*—from Agamemnon's departure for Troy through Orestes' return and slaying of Aigisthos and Klytāimnestra—as the “Oresteia” myth or story. By this label, I mean the different threads of the stories surrounding Orestes' *tisis* as they would have been known to the poet's auditors through oral and visual tradition. But as I discuss in chapter 6, the *Odyssey* presents several tendentious versions of that story.

scenes occur at several important points in the poem.⁶ These scenes present the gods as directing and commenting on the actions of mortals—in effect, steering the plot of the poem and evaluating its characters. The conversation Zeus initiates with Athena by citing the “Oresteia” myth resonates with the final divine council scene near the close of the poem, in which Athena initiates a conversation with Zeus (24.472–88). The full extent of the parallels between these two divine council scenes has not been properly appreciated, but, at a minimum, critics have noted how these two scenes, along with the final allusion to the “Oresteia” myth in Hades, form a programmatic frame around the epic.⁷

Even apart from the way Zeus’ opening speech corresponds to later scenes, its programmatic aspects have long been recognized.⁸ Compared to the *Iliad*’s ethical universe, where “there is no indication that Zeus is concerned with justice as such,” a new view of justice is on offer.⁹ Humans are ultimately responsible for their own suffering, and the good and wicked get their just deserts. The poem,

6. 1.26–102, 5.3–54, 12.374–88, 13.125–60, 24.472–88. See Marks (2008) 159–66.

7. Olson (1995) 24 writes, “The story of the *Odyssey* begins, oddly enough, not with the hero himself but with Zeus’ tale of Aigisthos and Orestes, just as the murdered ruler’s own bitter description of his death and the contrast it proves with Odysseus’ triumph virtually brings the epic to its close (24.95–97, 192–202; cf. 24.24–34).” On the connection between the two speeches, see also Hölscher (1967) 12: “Zeus’ final words at the conclusion to his suddenly confounded daughter—words with which he makes an end to the impending civil war after the death of the suitors—sound almost programmatic.” More generally, Gehrke (1987) 139–40, in the context of a survey of revenge across Greek culture, notes that the *Odyssey* would be better called an “epic of revenge upon the suitors” instead of, as it often is, “an epic of the wanderings of Odysseus.”

8. The first critics to note the programmatic aspects of this speech were Jaeger (1960) 315–38 (originally published in 1926) and Pfeiffer (1960) 17, 50 (originally published in 1928–29). See also Whitman (1958) 305, who notes “the moral design of the poem, the somewhat schematized view of poetic justice announced by Zeus in the exordium,” Rüter (1969) 64–82, especially his critique of van der Valk at 71 n. 29, Kullmann (1985) 5–7, Friedrich (1987) 375–76. Dodds (1951) 32 has given an especially influential ethical reading of the passage: “Placed where it is, at the very beginning of the poem, the remark sounds . . . ‘programmatic’”; see also Lloyd-Jones (1971) 29.

9. Dodds (1951) 32; see also Rüter (1969) 64; Cook (1995) 37; van Erp Taalman Kip (2000). The relationship between the *Iliad*’s and the *Odyssey*’s views of justice is not important for my immediate discussion, though it should be noted that the developmental model favored by Dodds has come under scrutiny: see Lloyd-Jones (1971) 28–32, though he still maintains that the epics differ in ethical outlook. Others have taken the critique further: e.g., Allan (2006) sees the epics’ ethics and theology as essentially identical. Other interpretations of the *Odyssey* as having a program of a (more-or-less) consistent theodicy include Friedrich (1987) and (1991), Segal (1994) 195–228; for interpretations stressing the inconsistency (though still as a part of a unified poem), see Fenik (1974) 208–30, Clay (1983) 213–39, Versnel (2011) esp. 162 (though mostly concerned with the *Iliad*). For the most recent statement on the *Odyssey*’s theodicy, see Grethlein (2017) 207–208, 227–42, who favors the (mostly) consistent interpretation.

then, is a theodicy that mounts a defense of the gods' moral standing on the terms set by Zeus in his opening apologia.¹⁰ But just how effective Zeus' defense turns out to be—or, to put it another way, to what extent the poet's use of the “Oresteia” myth as a definitive narrative ultimately succeeds in making the universe of the *Odyssey* just—is not a simple matter.¹¹ At this point in my discussion, the crucial matter is that the poet presents this myth as definitive, as a standard for all later considerations of revenge.

There is a strong consensus that this speech is important for interpreting the poem and its views on justice. Despite this, it is surprising that *tisis* in particular has received relatively little attention. A claim of *tisis* is central to the final divine council scene that corresponds to this opening divine council (24.472–88). In that scene at the close of the poem, Zeus resolves to put an end to the fighting arising from the demands of the suitors' kin for revenge on account of Odysseus' revenge against the suitors.¹² In Zeus' opening speech, revenge has an equally important role. And this idea of the “role” of revenge could be taken in a dramatic sense: it approaches that of a genuinely active participant in the story.

The full speech runs as follows (1.28–43):

τοῖσι δὲ μύθων ἦρχε πατήρ ἀνδρῶν τε θεῶν τε·
 μνήσατο γὰρ κατὰ θυμὸν ἀμύμονος Αἰγίσθοιο,
 τὸν ῥ' Ἀγαμεμνονίδης τηλεκλυτὸς ἔκταν' Ὀρέσσης· 30
 τοῦ ὃ γ' ἐπιμνησθεῖς ἔπε' ἀθανάτοισι μετηύδα·
 “ὦ πόποι, οἷον δὴ νῦν θεοὺς βροτοὶ αἰτιόωνται.
 ἔξ ἡμέων γάρ φασι κάκ' ἔμμεναι· οἱ δὲ καὶ αὐτοὶ
 σφῆσιν ἀτασθαλίησιν ὑπὲρ μόρον ἄλγε' ἔχουσιν,
 ὥς καὶ νῦν Αἰγισθος ὑπὲρ μόρον Ἀτρεΐδαο 35
 γῆμ' ἄλοχον μνηστήν, τὸν δ' ἔκτανε νοστήσαντα,
 εἰδὼς αἰπὺν ὄλεθρον, ἐπεὶ πρό οἱ εἶπομεν ἡμεῖς,
 Ἑρμείαν πέμψαντες, εὖσκοπον Ἀργεῖφρόντην,
 μήτ' αὐτὸν κτείνειν μήτε μνάσθαι ἄκοιτιν·

10. It is sometimes argued that Zeus only says *some* of the evils mortals suffer come from themselves: see S. West in Heubeck et al. ad 1.32–33; Grethlein (2017) 228–29. But Cook (1995) 46 rightly rebuts that it only makes rhetorical sense if Zeus' claim is universal.

11. See pp. 166–69. Cf. Dodds (1951) 32, who writes laconically, “the programme is carried out” oversimplifies the situation. Lloyd-Jones (1971) 29–30 is similarly sanguine about the justice of Zeus, who “sends men good or bad fortune . . . according to their deserts.”

12. The language of revenge, *tisis*, is prominent in Zeus' description of Odysseus' actions: ἀποτείσεται (480), ἐτείσατο (482).

ἐκ γὰρ Ὀρέσταιο τίσις ἔσσεται Ἀτρεΐδαι,
 ὅππότε ἂν ἡβήσῃ τε καὶ ἧς ἰμείρεται αἵης.
 ὥς ἔφαθ' Ἑρμείας, ἀλλ' οὐ φρένας Αἰγίσθοιο
 πεῖθ' ἀγαθὰ φρονέων· νῦν δ' ἀθρόα πάντ' ἀπέτεισε.” 40

*The father of men and gods began to address them.
 For he recalled in his heart flawless Aigisthos,
 whom far-famed Orestes, son of Agamemnon, slew. 30
 Remembering him, Zeus addressed the immortals:
 “Alas, how indeed mortals now blame the gods!
 From us, they say, there are evils, but they themselves
 by their own recklessness, beyond fate, have sorrows,
 just like even now Aigisthos. Beyond fate, he married 35
 the wedded wife of Atreus’ son, whom, upon his return, he slew.
 He knew his sheer destruction, since we told him before,
 sending Hermes, the keen-sighted Argos-slayer,
 not to kill him nor woo his wife.
 For from Orestes will be the retribution of the son of Atreus, 40
 whenever he comes of age and longs for his own land.
 So spoke Hermes, but he did not persuade the mind of Aigisthos,
 though he intended well. Now he has paid for everything all together.”*

The terminology of revenge appears in two prominent places in this speech. It first appears in a pivotal place in the middle of 40. Here, Zeus is describing the warning Hermes gave Aigisthos. Immediately after urging Aigisthos to refrain from his misdeeds (39), he invokes *tisis*—“there will be retribution” (τίσις ἔσσεται, 40)—as the reason why going through with his plans would be disastrous. According to Zeus and Hermes, *tisis* intervenes into a universe where the wicked might have prospered and it ensures that they will face justice. Articulated in the unusual way it is here—in a periphrasis with the relatively uncommon abstract form (τίσις) as the grammatical subject—revenge appears as a cosmic force. Both Orestes and Aigisthos recede as agents at this moment.¹³ Over the course of the poem, we shall see *tisis* often come to act as an independent, uncontrollable power. Sometimes *tisis* may be controlled and manipulated by human agents, but at other times it has a force and logic that cannot be contained. In Zeus’ present argument, the main effect of this phraseology is to underscore *tisis* as a model of justice. The poet revisits the pattern of act and consequence

13. On the semantic effects of this sort of periphrasis in Homer, see Long (1968) 64 and Jones (1973).

presented here throughout the rest of the poem, although the poet leaves open to dispute what counts as a wicked act and a just consequence.

The language of *tisis* also appears at the very end of the speech. Here, the verb ἀπέτεισε (43) is emphatic in its final position as the last word of the speech. The clause that the verb concludes—“now he has paid for everything all together”—epitomizes the narrative content of the speech. The verb is an aorist, whose perfective aspect provides a removed perspective, where the action is viewed as a whole in the eyes of the speaker. This is especially evident by the contrast in aspect offered by the preceding πεῖθε, an imperfect that presents the point of view of the events unfolding before the eyes of the speaker.¹⁴ The adverb νῦν, “the quintessential marker of speaker-oriented temporal deixis,”¹⁵ supports this change of perspective, moving the point of view to a removed distance. From this vantage, the audience can view the action of *tisis* in its totality, as opposed to the internal perspective of the foregoing narration of Hermes’ mission. This final, short statement by Zeus serves as a précis of his whole speech and focuses attention on the fact of greatest significance for his argument: Aigisthos is the deserving victim of revenge.

Revenge is thus central, both to this speech and to the program that Zeus announces for the whole poem. Furthermore, in the tradition of early epic poetry, Zeus’ plan corresponds to the poem’s program.¹⁶ Thus, Zeus’ judgment that Aigisthos’ fate is deserved and ought to stand as an example of the just result of *tisis*—as well as Athena’s agreement on this point (1.46–47)—adds to the authority that the *paradeigma* of Orestes’ *tisis* holds for the interpretation of other *tisis* narratives. The example of Orestes will serve as the focal point for the poem’s central theme of revenge.

The way that the poet emphasizes Orestes’ *tisis* would suggest to his auditors that this example is meant to be paradigmatic and definitive. As they hear the rest

14. On the contrasting meaning of imperfective aspect (of present and imperfect tenses) and perfective (of aorist tenses), see Bakker (1997a) and (1997b).

15. Bakker (1997a) 20.

16. The concept of “the plan of Zeus” is thematized in the epic tradition as Διὸς βουλή. Although this phrase *ipsissima verba* does not appear in the *Odyssey*, Marks (2008) 4 shows that it is “a traditional, and prominent, theme in early Greek epic” and a surreptitious, “unifying principle of the Odyssean narrative.” On “the plan of Zeus” in general, especially as a poetic device in the *Iliad*, see Marks (2008) 8–13, 132–46, *passim* and Nagy (1979) 81. Whitman (1958) 228, reaches similar conclusions about Homeric “fate” when he calls μόρος “the poet’s scenario.” Wilson (2010) 174, in his study on the use of the motif in the *Iliad*, emphasizes its metapoetic aspects: in Homeric poetry, Διὸς βουλή is “not merely the plot of his epic, but a mechanism for the poet to enter into the story.” The bibliography on the motif of Διὸς βουλή is extensive: see especially Kullmann (1955), Clay (1999), Elmer (2013) 155–66.

of the poem, their interpretation of all later cases of revenge in the poem would be shaped by this first instance. And as the auditors encounter further cases of *tisis*, they would revise their understanding of this initial case of Orestes. One reason the example of Orestes recurs throughout the poem is to encourage this process in which the various cases of *tisis* revise each other. With this in mind, it is worth taking a closer look at this initial example and seeing what it has to say about the *Odyssey*'s perspective on revenge.

2.2 *tisis as Narrative in the Odyssey*

In the last chapter, I analyzed *tisis* in archaic Greek culture as “negative reciprocity.” In this section, I develop this idea further with respect to the *Odyssey*. First, I should note that there has been some work analyzing incidents of revenge in Homer in terms of the emotions.¹⁷ These studies can be illuminating, and my way of analyzing *tisis* should not be taken as a rejection of these views—indeed, I turn to them for occasional insight into the poem's handling of revenge. But these studies do not fully grapple with the narrative and transactional character of *tisis*.

One study of Homeric retribution deserves special mention. Donna Wilson has looked at cases of retribution in the *Iliad* under the rubric of “giving ransom” (*ἄποινα*) versus “taking revenge” (*ποινή*).¹⁸ The most important difference between these two modes of “compensation” (to use her term) is which party is cast as the offender in the exchange. On the one hand, the party who takes *ποινή* from another is cast as the one slighted, taking honor back from one who wronged him; on the other hand, the party who receives *ἄποινα* is cast as the original aggressor, receiving ransom in order to return a captive. This is a sophisticated analysis of reciprocity, revealing much about the ideological structures involved in the conflict in the *Iliad* between Agamemnon and Achilles and in Achilles' rampage against the Trojans after the death of Patroklos. Perhaps of most relevance to the *Odyssey* is how Wilson has drawn attention to the way debates about compensation may revolve around what she calls “path”—that is, the kind and value

17. Emotional approaches are often connected with analysis of the Homeric social relations as part of a “shame culture,” an idea that is usually traced back to Benedict (1946) by way of Dodds (1951) 1–63 and Finley (1954) 109–56: see Gehrke (1987), Cairns (1993) and (2003), Harris (2001) 131–56, Konstan (2006) 41–76.

18. Wilson (2002). She groups *tisis* with her “revenge” theme (23–25). Cairns (2011) has registered serious reservations about her approach. Some of his criticisms are well taken: if Agamemnon is offering Achilles *ἄποινα* in a traditional sense, it would have the undesired effect of casting Agamemnon in an inferior position (97–98).

of thing exchanged (e.g., goods, lives).¹⁹ As useful as this study is for the *Iliad*, it has limited application to the *Odyssey*. The diction that Wilson has isolated as significant in the *Iliad*'s discourse of compensation is almost entirely absent from the *Odyssey*.²⁰ Furthermore, some of the important situations involving compensation for offenses in the *Odyssey* do not map onto Wilson's model, or they map on in multiple ways.²¹ In the *Odyssey*, while distinctions between ransom and revenge recede, different aspects of negative reciprocity come to the fore. These aspects, though not at the forefront in the *Iliad*, are present in that poem as well, as the examples studied in the last chapter showed. In addition, the *Odyssey* is most especially set apart by the narrative form *tisis* takes on in it. *tisis* in the *Odyssey* has an internal structure in the form of a story pattern, which is mostly absent (or, at least, of less importance) in the *Iliad*.

In the *Odyssey*'s opening example of Orestes we can detect that the poet is presenting a model case in order to, among other things, define *tisis* in a particular way for the program of the poem. Some caution here is warranted, however. This definition cannot be separated from its rhetorical context. Zeus has an apologetic purpose to his speech and, consequently, is not offering an objective statement about the nature of *tisis*. In his response to mortals' accusation that the gods are to blame for evil—"they say evils come from us" (ἐξ ἡμέων γάρ φασι κακὰ ἔμμεναι, 33)—Zeus says that mortals bring evil upon themselves, of their own free will: "But they themselves by their own recklessness, beyond fate, have sorrows" (οἱ δὲ καὶ αὐτοὶ σφῆσιν ἀτασθαλίῃσιν ὑπὲρ μόρον ἄλγ' ἔχουσιν, 33–34). The example he gives to illustrate this point is Aigisthos, who performed his self-destructive crimes of wooing Klytaimnestra and killing Agamemnon, despite specific warnings and having the power and opportunity to refrain from doing

19. Wilson (2002) 17–18, 26–28. She notes that with *ποινή* the emphasis falls upon equivalence; with *ἄποινα*, upon its limitlessness (39).

20. *ἄποινα* never appears; *ποινή* only once (23.312).

21. Wilson (2002) categorizes Eurymachos' offer at 22.45–59 as "a socially acceptable offer of *poine*" (77). On the one hand, Eurymachos' diction (*ἀποδώσομεν*, 58) is typical of the *ποινή* theme: see Wilson *ibid.* 91. On the other hand, the giving of *ποινή* implies responsibility. And Eurymachos does not admit guilt in any straightforward way here: even though the suitors committed *ἀτάσθαλα* (47), Antinoös is really, Eurymachos claims, "responsible for all" (*αἴτιος* . . . *πάντων*, 48) their offenses. *πάντων* is important here: Antinoös is to blame not only for the specific offenses Eurymachos will go on to name—plotting to kill Telemachos and usurping the rule of Ithaca (52–53)—but also for every offense for which Odysseus is poised to kill them. (For an interpretation of this case as an example of the *ἄποινα* theme, see Bakker [2013] 46 n. 22.) In any case, it remains to explain why Odysseus chooses to exact revenge in the form of death, rather than in material recompense. As we shall see, much depends on Odysseus' position at this moment as the agent with the power to tell his story of revenge as he sees fit, dictating the temporality and calculation of the repayment he is owed.

them. The specific details of Aigisthos' case are important, and I will examine them more closely later, but it is first worth considering some generic aspects of *tisis* as presented in Zeus' speech.

Addressing the generic aspects of *tisis* means considering those aspects about an example that are abstractable and might be shared with other examples of *tisis*. The first thing to draw attention to in the example case of Orestes' *tisis* is that Zeus presents it as a narrative. Put most simply, this means that when Zeus cites Orestes' revenge, he is telling a story. He uses words to describe a set of events that he has organized into a meaningful series, a coherent whole that tells a narrative. The particular makeup of the events and actors and their internal logical relationships help to distinguish and define this narrative as one type of narrative among other types.²² To define *tisis* in the *Odyssey* in these structural terms, it is a retaliatory action that an avenger performs—especially killing—that at the same time implies an entire sequence of events that makes the act of killing (to use English terms) into “retribution” rather than “murder” or some other way of conceiving of killing. I also mean to indicate by using the term “narrative” that *tisis* is constructed—that is, “narrated”—by a storyteller to an audience.

With *tisis* considered as a type of narrative, narratological theory provides a useful set of tools to study it more closely—in particular, what is sometimes called a sequential model. This method of analysis treats narratives as a linear sequence of events or stages.²³ The sequence of events in this model is equivalent to Mieke Bal's definition of a “fabula”—which should be taken as synonymous with narrative in my analysis: a “series of logically or chronologically related events that are caused or experienced by actors.”²⁴

22. Considered thus as a type of narrative, *tisis* is similar to other generic narrative units that constitute the poem, from the smallest in scale (type-scenes) to the largest (story-patterns). A characteristic of Homeric epic is its all-embracing tendency to incorporate myriad subgenres, such as praise poetry, proverbs, and catalogues: see Martin (1989) 43–88, Foley (2004) 172, 181–82, Bakker (2013) 1–12. *tisis* is closest in scale to the “story-pattern,” on which see Lord (1995) 12–13. Lord (1960) 1958–85 and Foley (1990) 359–87 have analyzed the *Odyssey* as a narrative in the mold of the “return-song” story-pattern.

23. This sort of analysis has its roots in the work of Vladimir Propp and was further developed by the French structuralists. (Propp calls the events in the sequence “functions.”) To be clear, in my interpretation of the *Odyssey*'s *tisis* narratives I am only referring to Propp as a founder of the methods of structural analysis of narrative. I am not engaging directly with the particulars of his analysis of Russian folktales. For a recent interpretation of the *Odyssey* using Propp's particular model, see Bakker (2013) 13–35.

24. See Bal (1985) 5. The “fabula” is the underlying structure of the narrative in its proper logical sequence as opposed to the way that the narrative is actually told, the “story” (*syuzhet*), in which events may appear out of order or be retold. See also de Jong *viv*, xviii; Genette (1988) 13–20.

Under this narratological approach, *tisis* is a series of events or stages. Its basic shape, therefore, can be described diagrammatically, using a sequential model. Taking my cue from Zeus, I use Orestes' *tisis*, as described in 1.28–43, as a paradigmatic example. I could represent this sequential structure using a linear formula. Such a diagram would look like this (see figure 2.1).

- Example of “Oresteia”: Agamemnon leaves → Hermes warns → Aigisthos woos; plots ambush → Aigisthos commits adultery, murder → Orestes returns → Orestes kills, achieves revenge
- Generic Formula: Absence → Warning (unheeded) → Preparations for the offense → Offense → Preparations for retributive act → Retributive act → Just order restored

FIG. 2.1 Linear Formula of *tisis*

I find such a formula to be less transparent and thus less useful than a table. Therefore, on table 2.1 I have diagrammed Orestes' *tisis* side-by-side with the abstracted, generic pattern. I have abstracted this generic pattern from the case of Orestes, but as we will see later, other cases of *tisis* in the poem can be mapped onto it.

Table 2.1 The *tisis* Sequence Diagrammed

Order	Event/State	
	“Oresteia” <i>tisis</i> Sequence	Generic <i>tisis</i> Sequence
1	Agamemnon has left Mycenae, leaving behind Klytaimnestra and Aigisthos.	Background conditions: master is absent.
2	Zeus sends Hermes to warn Aigisthos; he is not persuaded.	Unheeded warning: grounds for ἀτασθαλίαι.
3	Aigisthos woos Klytaimnestra, plots ambush and murder of Agamemnon.	Plotting and preparation I: for the precipitating offense.
4	Aigisthos commits adultery with Klytaimnestra, murders Agamemnon.	Precipitating offense.
5	Orestes returns to Mycenae.	Plotting and preparation II: for the retributive act.
6	Orestes kills Aigisthos and Klytaimnestra.	Retributive act.
7	Aigisthos has repaid in full.	New conditions: former order is restored.

I have made the initial and final stages of the pattern (“background conditions” and “new conditions”) part of this sequence, though they are normally only an implicit part of a *tisis* narrative and are not narrated as such. For instance, in addition to summarizing the narrative, Zeus’ final clause, “Now he has paid for everything all together” (νῦν δ’ ἀθρόα πάντ’ ἀπέτεισε, 1.43), suggests the existence of a new set of conditions—a new state—that has come about as a result of the previous six stages. Therefore, because the elements of this sequence appear in the poem both as “states” and “events,” I encompass both by using the term “stages” to describe these sequentially ordered elements.

In this sequential-stage analysis of Orestes’ *tisis*, there are a few ambiguous points where different events may occupy the same point in the structure. In the first place, as we shall see in the next chapter, different agents or narrators can identify different sets of initial conditions against which the precipitating offense occurs. One agent’s precipitating offense might, therefore, be another’s just, retributive action. As the “Oresteia” is told in the *Odyssey*, there is no mention of the offenses of Atreus or Agamemnon, both famous parricides in other traditions (especially in Aeschylus). These offenses might have been used to construct a different *tisis* narrative with a different set of initial conditions. In general, however, this myth follows the structural pattern laid out here.

2.3 *tisis*, Intratextuality, and Irony

When considering *tisis* as a narrative pattern that has Orestes’ vengeance as its paradigmatic instance, it is also important to note that the details of diction matter. The formal, narrative similarities of different instances of *tisis* may coincide with similarities of language that strengthen the sense of connection among different instances of *tisis*. It is often the case that shared, common elements of formal structure have diction that is typical for them. For example, as we shall see, the term “recklessness” (ἄτασθαλίας) is typical in the warning stage of a *tisis* narrative. The several cases of *tisis* are thus both structurally linked by having the same narrative element (an unheeded warning) and textually linked by sharing this same specific language (ἄτασθαλίας). Such links among different passages in a text through specific, shared diction may be called “intratextual.” Just as the well-known term “intertextuality” is used to describe the relationship among different texts—for instance, between the *Odyssey* and the *Iliad*—intratextuality describes similar relationships, but within a single text—in the present case, the *Odyssey*.²⁵ The primary way these intratextual relationships happen is through

25. On intratextuality in Homer, see Currie (2016) 17–18, 259–62 and 11 nn. 57–58 for further bibliography.

shared words and phrases—that is, diction—but they can also occur through images, similes, and motifs, which may share a larger or smaller amount of language with each other.

Formal structure—that is, abstracted, sequential stages of a narrative—and intratextual connections—that is, concrete, specific, shared diction—may work together. A poet may signal—and an auditor may recognize—that a structural element is present in an instance of *tisis* by using specific, concrete diction that, through its intratextual resonances, evokes other occasions in which that structural element occurs. Intratextual linkages can be subtle and nuanced: the poet may make these connections across instances of *tisis* more or less strong by using or avoiding shared diction. Intratextuality, thus, supports structural analysis by drawing attention to the structural similarities (and differences) among different instances of *tisis*. Even situations where intratextual and structural approaches appear to be in conflict may actually be revealed to be more interesting because of the conflict. As we shall see in the case of Poseidon's retribution against Odysseus, diction can point toward dissimilarity, toward the encounter not being a case of *tisis*, while structure may point toward similarity, toward its being a case of *tisis*. This reveals important aspects of the poet's art and of the role of rhetoric in the poem's ethics. These relationships between diction and structure will become clearer later when we look more closely at specific instances of *tisis*.

This model of intratextuality depends on the idea that the meaning of specific instances of words, phrases, and images comes, at least in part, from their relationship to other instances in which those words, phrases, and images are used. The accumulated sense an auditor or speaker has of the contexts in which an expression has occurred forms the expression's "connotation," to use a somewhat imprecise term. An expression's connotation, thus defined, is as much a part of its meaning as its denotation.²⁶ This approach is similar to Egbert Bakker's model of "interformularity" in the Homeric poems. Bakker argues that repeated diction represents the judgment by a speaker (or a poet) that the different contexts in which this diction recurs are similar. According to Bakker, such repetitions exist on a continuum: less common expressions, which show up in a smaller range of

26. Some linguists are increasingly recognizing that many aspects of human language—syntax, semantics, language acquisition—can be explained by recourse to intertextual models that are usage-oriented. These models of language emphasize the enormous amount of conventional, apparently redundant expressions a speaker knows and can use, which are tied to actual situations in which the expressions are used. For one recent example, see Gasparov (2010). Gasparov's "intertextual" theory of speech builds both on the literary criticism of Bakhtin (1981, 1984, and 1986) and Kristeva (1980 and 1984) and on work in cognitive linguistics, esp. Langacker (1987) 154–65, who, influenced by Haiman (1980), has developed an "encyclopedia" conception of semantics.

contexts, are felt to indicate more similarity in their different situations; more common expressions indicate less similarity.²⁷ I borrow from and extend this model: the less common and more restricted an expression, the more specific and complex the connotations it bears. When an expression indicates that two situations have more similarity, there is a greater amount of details that those two situations have in common. Such an expression has richer connotations.

Bakker is one of several scholars who have recently argued that intratextuality and intertextuality in Homer exist on a continuum.²⁸ One virtue of seeing Homeric poetry working this way is that it reconciles two ways of thinking about repetition in Homer that are often seen to be at odds. Some scholars have advocated for a model of “traditional referentiality,” in which repeated diction refers not to specific antecedents but a tradition; others have argued that even in an oral-derived poem specific allusion is possible and, indeed, occurs with some frequency in Homer.²⁹ At one end of the spectrum, we have epithets like ἀμύμων, which occur in such a wide range of contexts that it no longer makes sense to consider them as alluding to any specific antecedent or even, primarily, to their plain, denotative meaning; rather, they index tradition.³⁰ It is in such cases that the model of traditional referentiality is quite effective. At the other end of the spectrum we have explicit allusions, as when Odysseus, in order to encourage himself among the suitors, recalls earlier his victory over Polyphemos, citing the *Κύκλωψ* (20.17–21).³¹ A little lower from that end of the spectrum is an example

27. Bakker (2013) 159: “the more specific a formula and/or the more restricted its distribution, the greater the possible awareness of its recurrence and of its potential for signaling meaningful repetition.” This scale encodes the “specificity of the similarity of scenes to each other.” For a concise statement of Bakker’s method, see Bakker (2013) 157–69. His approach is also indebted to cognitive linguistics, esp. Chafe (1994).

28. See also Currie (2016) 35.

29. The principal advocate of “traditional referentiality” has been Foley: see esp. his (1999) 13–36. The other side of the debate is commonly associated with advocates of neoanalysis, such as Kullmann: see his (1960) and (1992). The tensions between these models are well summarized by Currie (2016) 4–33 and, drawing on older scholarship, Willcock (1990). One aspect of this tension is the undeniable presence of aspects of the poem that are typological—i.e., simply typical motifs that have countless manifestations in the Greek epic tradition. One can admit typologies like the arming type-scene exist without assuming that every instance of repetition is a typology: see Danek (2002a) esp. 17 and Burgess (2006) 155–58.

30. I left off translating ἀμύμων because its denotative meaning—“blameless” or “flawless”—is so misleading: it modifies both heroic figures like Antilochos and villains like Aigisthos. On this example, see Foley (1999) 211–13.

31. Even if we think the allusion in Book 20 to Odysseus’ encounter with Polyphemos is not an allusion to the *Odyssey*’s Book 9, but rather to the relatively fixed tradition of Odysseus’ encounter with Polyphemos, the audience still would have understood the allusion as to the

such as the parallel similes of 5.394–98 and 23.233–38: in both similes, the restoration of a head of a household to his family and shipwrecked sailors swimming and regaining land are compared. If we hypothesize that the connection between these similes is meaningful, then we will find numerous verbal echoes and thematic correspondences in support of this judgment. But there is also a (small) degree of traditional referentiality at work here as well: it may be a traditional motif to compare rescue at sea and restoration of a family member.³² One feature shared both by occasions of traditional referentiality and by those of allusion is that both evoke more meaning than their plain, denotative surface indicates. An expression such as ἀμύμων (or δῖος or πολύτλας) evokes a set of connotations within the tradition of Homeric poetry that is much richer than its plain denotation of “blameless” (or “divine” or “much-enduring”). Allusive language works much the same by bringing to mind other contexts and the meanings of those passages.³³ There are instances where it may be difficult to decide if the allusive diction of a passage draws upon the connotations of specific antecedent instances of *tisis* or upon those connotations that are typical of *tisis* in general.³⁴ Such instances lie in the middle of the continuum between traditional referentiality and specific allusion.³⁵

In Bakker’s model, we cannot establish priority among expressions; rather, we are dealing with reciprocal likeness, none of the individual instances being the

earlier part of the performance in the context of a performance or reading of the whole poem. It is possible, however, if only episodes of the poem were performed on an occasion and if the content of the poem were to some degree fluid, that even this sort of apparently specific allusion might be instead an allusion to a tradition, not this text. But it seems more likely that the *Odyssey*, in the form in which we have it, is meant to be performed or read as a single, monumental text.

32. On the pair of similes and the thematic implications of their connection, see Purves (2010) 90–93, Currie (2016) 259–61. The relationship between these similes is complex: among other reasons, the vehicle and the tenor are reversed from one simile to the other. In the first simile Odysseus, upon swimming within sight of Scherie, is compared to children who have the head of the household restored to them out of an illness; in the second simile, Odysseus has now become the restored head of the household, but Penelope’s reaction to him is the true subject of the simile. She is compared to swimming sailors and he to the land.

33. Kelly (2007) 12 n. 41 notes the basic similarity: “specified references must be related to traditional referentiality, for they too are predicated on relational meaning, by inviting the audience to import externalities to the interpretation of the current example.”

34. Cf. Kelly (2007) 12 n. 43, who notes a number of places in *Iliad* 8 where it is ambiguous whether the reference is a specific or a generic allusion.

35. There are also, of course, repetitions of completely ordinary, nonformulaic diction that has relatively insignificant connotations for two reasons: first, it can appear in a wide range of contexts; second, because it is not strongly tied to the tradition, and thus does not have traditional referentiality. Such cases are unimportant for this study.

original to which later ones allude.³⁶ There are other models of intratextuality (and intertextuality) that do allow that individual cases may be more or less consonant with their context and thus more or less striking. An unusual or marked instance will thus be more likely to recall to the mind of an auditor more typical contexts. Therefore, even if we cannot say that one passage is the source for an allusion, we may be able to say that individual passages are more or less representative of how that diction is used in an unmarked, typical context.³⁷ In an important sense, then, we may still be able to say that a marked instance of shared diction is “transferred” (as the neoanalysts say) from more typical contexts, bringing along with it the connotations of those contexts. In chapters 4 and 5 I examine examples where Polyphemos’ cannibalism, the suitors’ feasting, and Odysseus’ slaughter of the suitors are connected by intratextuality.³⁸ In these cases, the language that connotes the consumption of human flesh and blood is perfectly consonant with Polyphemos’ actions in Book 9, but incongruous and thus meaningful in the context of a feast in Odysseus’ home. When considering intratextual priority, it may also make sense on occasion to observe the linear order of the poem as it would unfold over a performance (or a reading, for that matter). For instance, the pair of similes mentioned earlier—an example of an “anticipatory doublet”—appear to function as if the last instance is a culmination of a series or in some way complements the earlier.³⁹ And when considering priority, it is important to note that, from the opening programmatic debate between Zeus and Athena to the poem’s conclusion, the example of Orestes is the case of *tisis* that the *Odyssey* routinely presents as paradigmatic.

Such considerations of intratextuality are important when studying *tisis*. The poet, while narrating or referring to one instance of *tisis*, persistently refers to other instances in the poem. These intratextualities may be either specific allusions or implicit evocations by means of the connotations of diction, images, and similes. In this way, certain recurring diction is typical for *tisis*. *tisis* may thus be marked and identified both verbally and structurally. I, therefore, use both a formal, structural approach and an intratextual approach working together to define *tisis*.

36. Bakker (2013) 163–64.

37. See Currie (2016) 11, 33, 261–62 on the markedness of an allusive passage. He writes, “the condition of markedness will be met when allusion is claimed between passages which share striking and distinctive non-typical elements, or typical elements that are deployed in contextually striking and distinctive ways” (33). See also Burgess (2006) 170 on how the “inappropriateness” of a motif is meant to evoke another, more appropriate context.

38. See pp. 130–31, 148–49, 182–83.

39. See Fenik (1968) 213–14; Burgess (2006) 157–61. On doublets more generally in the *Odyssey*, see Fenik (1974) 133–232.

Finally, we should also note that one effect of these intratextual connections is that they may create ironies. If a speaker uses an expression that has rich connotations outside its typical context, an auditor may perceive an incongruity and, with it, a certain shadow of meaning lying behind it. There are limits to the sort of incongruity that will be found in the *Odyssey*. The poem uses a highly traditional language in a traditional genre. The poet of the *Odyssey* is an epic poet, not a modernist one creating radically new, inappropriate expressions. The incongruities in the *Odyssey* are a matter of a difference between denotation and connotation, a word or phrase that, in its immediate context, appears to mean one thing, but when considered in its wider context, may, in addition, mean something rather different.⁴⁰ Homeric poetry is not usually obscure in its reference. Apart from some archaic vocabulary, the poems tend to be quite clear on what they are describing, not uncommonly elaborating on an idea in order to clarify the reference. On the other hand, the full significance of a Homeric expression might be more ambiguous.

This ambiguity and multiplicity of meaning that some expressions bear might be called a type of irony. According to some broader definitions of the concept, irony involves latent, additional meanings, supplementing (and often undercutting) surface meanings, which a poet intends a perceptive auditor to detect.⁴¹ The most accepted kinds of irony rely upon a verbal ambiguity, occasions in which words mean more than one thing. For instance, in a case of dramatic irony, the suitors pray for Odysseus that “Zeus would give to you . . . what you most desire” (δοίη . . . ὅττι μάλιστα ἐθέλεις, 18.112–13), thinking he is only a beggar who wants food, not realizing his “desire” is actually their deaths.⁴² There are also situational ironies, when circumstances appear

40. On connotation and denotation in Homeric diction, see Kelly (2007) 6: “Homeric poetics operates within a creative dynamic between *denotative* and *connotative* levels of signification, wherein the latter provides the audience with intimations about the element which are not clear from its denotative or lexical meaning alone.” See also Currie (2016) 35, who draws on Conte (1986): “*Connotation* conveys a similar notion to allusion, but coupled with its companion term *denotation* usefully draws attention to the simultaneous presence of two levels of signification.”

41. For instance, Muecke (1970) 33 quotes Chevalier (1932) 42: “a contrast between a reality and an appearance”; see also Booth (1974) and (1961) 304 whose rhetorical definition of irony stresses the “collusion” of the author and the reader. On irony in the *Iliad*, see Rabel (1997) 8, *passim*, de Jong (1987) 81–87; on the *Odyssey*, see Dekker (1965), Rutherford (1992) 10, 59, Loudon (2011) 34, 258–82, Bonifazi (2012) 69–125.

42. This is one of the few times irony is explicitly marked as such. The passage concludes with the statement that “Odysseus rejoiced at the omen” (χαίρειν δὲ κληηδόνι διὸς Ὀδυσσεύς, 117). An omen in this sense only exists if the one uttering it is not aware of the full import of his or her words—i.e., is the naïve participant in an irony.

to be a certain way or that they will have certain results, but in reality are quite different or have quite different results. The suitors, for instance, in their effort to marry Penelope and trap her in what they call a “loathsome marriage” (*στυγερὸν γάμον*, 24.126), end up the celebrants and sacrificial victims of a mock wedding banquet for her remarriage with Odysseus. All these types of irony are united by the way they depend upon a discrepancy between appearance and reality. There are other examples that do not easily fall under an uncontested definition of irony. Rather than enter into the long, fractious debate over the meaning of that term, I find it more expedient to frame my analysis in terms of connotations of meaning that change, and sometimes go as far as to contradict, a surface meaning. (I do, nonetheless, use irony as an analytical term at certain points where it is most appropriate.) We may consider moments and expressions multivalent (or ironic) when two different meanings, a surface meaning and a latent one, can be perceived.

2.4 *Distinctive Features of tisis in the Odyssey*

In addition to this structural and intratextual description of actions, a few further points about the ideology of Orestes’ *tisis* in the *Odyssey* need to be considered, especially as they relate to the background of *tisis* in wider archaic Greek society as discussed in the last chapter. We find that against that wider background, *tisis* in the *Odyssey* is distinguished in a few important ways. The three aspects of *tisis* that are significant in archaic Greek texts remain important in the *Odyssey*, though they are manipulated in particular ways. There is one particular element—the victim’s “recklessness” (*ἀτασθαλίας*)—that has special significance in the *Odyssey*’s ideology of *tisis*.

As to the first significant aspect of *tisis*, its temporality, there is a tendency toward synchrony between precipitating offense and punishment. As we shall see in more detail in chapter 4 in the analysis of Odysseus’ *tisis* on the suitors, this synchronic pull runs up against the reality of Odysseus’ long absence before he can execute his revenge. However, the poet is careful to have the suitors recommit their crimes in front of Odysseus in person. The poet evokes certain ambiguities in how their crimes and punishments are described to underscore this synchrony. Theoklymenos’ vision, as I mentioned earlier, reveals a deeper synchrony behind a diachronic appearance. The “Oresteia” has a similar temporal structure. Though Orestes’ eventual revenge is delayed until the eighth year, the poet represents Aigisthos’ crimes as already setting in motion his later downfall. This is most clearly the case with Aigisthos’ *ἀτασθαλίαι* (which I examine shortly later), but it is also perhaps the case in the way Nestor describes how Aigisthos succeeded in wooing Klytaimnestra.

According to Nestor, Klytaimnestra was not at first willing to submit to Aigisthos' advances, at least in part because a singer was guarding her (3.265–68).⁴³ But eventually Aigisthos marooned the singer on a desert island and won over Klytaimnestra. The decisive moment is described this way: “But when indeed the doom of gods bound him to be overcome . . .” (ἀλλ’ ὅτε δὴ μιν μοῖρα θεῶν ἐπέδησε δαμῆναι, 269). But the pronoun μιν, translated provisionally as “him,” is ambiguous. While more commentators have favored identifying it with Klytaimnestra, there is a good case that it may refer to Aigisthos.⁴⁴ In only two other places in Homer does the “fate/doom of the god(s)” “bind” or “destroy” a person. After killing the suitors, Odysseus interprets why they died: “These men here the doom of the gods and their cruel deeds defeated” (τούσδε δὲ μοῖρ’ ἐδάμασσε θεῶν καὶ σχέτλια ἔργα, 22.413). In this case, Odysseus is proclaiming that the suitors have essentially killed themselves. Their earlier crimes—their σχέτλια ἔργα—brought about their later violent reciprocation, and their deaths were determined in advance by fate, μοῖρα. The other occasion comes in an allusion to the wooing of Chloris.⁴⁵ Neleus won her with the help of his brother, Melampous, whom “the harsh fate of the god bound down” (χαλεπήν δὲ θεοῦ κατὰ μοῖρα πέδησε, 11.292). Melampous’ “fate” was to be caught in the act of trying to steal cattle that Neleus needed to win Chloris. Melampous was thus imprisoned by Iphiklos for a year. “Fate” in this case conflates normal temporal distinctions. Melampous is a seer, and he had earlier foretold that he would be caught. Yet, he still proceeded to try to steal the cattle. (Eventually he would obtain them as a payment for advice he gave to Iphiklos, and all this unfolded as “the will of Zeus” [Διός . . . βουλῇ, 297].) Thus, Melampous in effect chose to suffer imprisonment. Given the evidence of these two parallel cases, it is reasonable, if still uncertain, to conclude that the poet is presenting Aigisthos as choosing his own doom at the moment he does away with the singer and corrupts Klytaimnestra. As in the case of the suitors and Melampous, the poet represents this choice as the μοῖρα, the “fate” or “doom” of the god(s), “binding” or “defeating.”

As to the second aspect of *tisis*, there is a tendency toward a calculated reciprocation. Zeus’ speech concludes in such a way as to underscore the equivalence

43. Cf. Phemios, who sings to the suitors of the *nostoi* of the Achaeans (1.325–27), which likely would have included the downfall of Aigisthos. A singer, thus, can act as a warning figure through the use of negative exempla.

44. In favor of Klytaimnestra: S. West in Heubeck et al., ad loc., Stanford, ad loc., Ameis-Hentze-Cauer, ad loc. They compare passages such as *Il.* 14.316 and 353, where sexual desire “defeats” (ἐδάμασσεν/δαμείς) Zeus.

45. The myth is alluded to at 11.281–297 and 15.225–37. See the scholium ad 11.287 for the details of the myth.

between initial criminal act and retribution. I already alluded to how Achilles' *tisis* against Hektor echoes Orestes' against Aigisthos at this moment: with a half-line unique to these two places, Hektor and Aigisthos "now pay back for everything all together" (*νῦν δ' ἄθροα πάντ' ἀποτίσεις/ἀπέτεισε*, *Il.* 22.271/*Od.* 1.43). In the *Odyssey's* case, the speech concludes here. While, in the *Iliad*, Achilles elaborates upon the offense for which his victim will suffer, here Zeus emphasizes the totality of Orestes' revenge. When Orestes kills Aigisthos, it accounts for "all" his transgressions. Furthermore, the word denoting Orestes' retributive killing of Aigisthos corresponds precisely to the one denoting Aigisthos' precipitating murder of Agamemnon (in both cases *ἔκταν(ε)*, 30, 36; cf. *ἔκτανε/ἔκτα* 3.307/308). The words' positions—as the penultimate words in verses only six lines apart—underscores the parallelism. The poet creates another verbal parallelism when he has Zeus say that mortals have received their woes "beyond fate" (*ὑπὲρ μόρον*, 34), just as Aigisthos committed his offenses "beyond fate" (*ὑπὲρ μόρον*, 35). Again, position of the terms underscores the parallelism: they occupy the same metrical position in adjacent lines.⁴⁶ Misdeeds committed "beyond fate" (35) result in suffering that comes "beyond fate" (34). With these parallelisms, poetic diction enforces this ideology of symmetrical violence. I say "enforces" (rather than simply "captures") to emphasize the role of rhetoric: a speaker's move to describe the two violent actions with the same words inscribes the events in a story of *tisis* where the result is rendered just. This is just one example of a general trend in the *Odyssey* toward precise equivalence between the initial offense and its reciprocation. From a structural point of view, this correspondence can be observed between stages four and six of the narrative sequence and, to a lesser extent, between stages three and five. The preparation to commit the offense and the offense itself are later echoed in the preparation to reciprocate the reciprocation itself. As to the third aspect of *tisis*, the role of an agent in determining whether an assault is a justified act of retribution, we may note that in every case

46. The meaning of the phrase is much debated. One popular view is that, in 34, Zeus means that mortals bring upon themselves some additional "portion" (the etymological meaning of *μόρος*) of evil "beyond" what the gods have already assigned them; see, for example, Rüter (1969) 70. There is a problem with this interpretation. Rüter seems to admit as much when he notes that this defense only covers "the worst catastrophes" so that fate seems "milder." On this interpretation, there would still be the remaining evils in the world that fate (and ultimately the gods) causes, but the complaint in 33 seems to cover all evil that mortals face. See also Whitman (1958) 227–28, Fränkel (1962) 83, Janko in Kirk et al., ad 3.5–6. More recent interpretations have stressed the complexity of the Homeric view of fate: Morrison (1997), Hammer (1998). See also p. 55 n. 10 earlier. Also, it should be noted that in 35 the phrase functions differently, modifying Aigisthos' subjective actions, not the passive sufferings of mortals. I prefer to interpret the phrases as meaning "outside of fate"—i.e., beyond what fate has dictated must happen, a sphere of action where mortals (like Aigisthos) can exhibit a (relatively) free will.

in which Orestes' killing of Aigisthos is called an act of *tisis* it is an internal narrator that does so.⁴⁷ Both the death of Aigisthos (1.29–30) and the death of Agamemnon (24.22) are mentioned by the external narrator, but only in neutral terms. The language of *tisis* is only applied to the narrative by an interested speaker who is giving a moral interpretation of events.

It is also worth noting that with *tisis* in the *Odyssey* the avenger has a close relationship with the avenged. Especially common are father/son relationships, one acting as an avenger for the other. The opening lines give examples of both: Orestes acts as avenger for Agamemnon (his father) and Poseidon for Polyphemos (his son).⁴⁸ In the case of Agamemnon, the poet underscores the importance of this relationship with the diction he regularly attaches to Aigisthos that deprecates him as a “father-slayer,” whose death is the cause of Orestes' fame: (1.299–300, 3.197–205, 307–8). The *Odyssey* will present further examples of both fathers and sons as avengers, though in Odysseus' revenge against the suitors, as we shall see, the role played by the father-son relationship has a rather more complicated part in the structure of the narratives.

Finally, stage two of the sequence of actions that makes up *tisis*—the unheeded warning—might seem an unnecessary element. It is not hard to imagine a revenge narrative that excludes it: analytic and neoanalytic scholars have long noted that Hermes' embassy to Aigisthos has no other trace in the mythic tradition of the “Oresteia” outside the *Odyssey*. They thus conclude that this element is a Homeric invention—or worse, a later addition.⁴⁹ The poet could have told the narrative of Orestes' revenge without it, but the decision to include the embassy is part of a deliberate program to define an Odyssean *tisis*. Even if Hermes' embassy was already established in the mythic tradition as a possible element of the story before the poet composed his succinct version of the “Oresteia” myth for this passage, the poet was under no obligation to include it. The poet's choice to include the embassy here and tell it the way he does is meaningful. Hermes' mission unfolds over seven of the twelve lines (37–43) of Zeus' speech, and the culminating event in the myth—the death of Aigisthos—is given in the reported words of Hermes.

Though Hermes' warning and Aigisthos' ἀτασθαλῖαι are only mentioned in Zeus' opening speech, Nestor speaks of perhaps another warning figure in connection with the “Oresteia” narrative: the anonymous singer whom Agamemnon commanded to guard Klytaimnestra while he was away. The poet does not make

47. Hermes (via Zeus): 1.40; Zeus: 1.43; Nestor: 3.195, 197; Telemachos: 3.203.

48. On the analogy implied in the opening between these two relationships, see Cook (1995) 23.

49. West in Heubeck et al. ad 1.37ff., Danek ad 1.32–43, M. L. West (2014) 146 n. 5.

explicit how the singer was to protect her. But since Aigisthos had tried to “enchant” her “in words” (θέλγεσκ’ ἐπέεσσιν, 3.264) and failed at first, the implication is that the singer had an important restraining force upon Klytaimnestra’s will. She had a “good mind” (φρεσί . . . ἀγαθῇσι, 264), evidently receptive to the good words of the singer. (Compare how Hermes, “advising good” [ἀγαθὰ φρονέων, 1.43], failed to change Aigisthos’ “mind” [φρένας, 42].) After the singer was removed, she became “willing” (ἐθέλουσαν, 272). The fact that this protecting figure is a singer, whose skill lies most especially in crafting words, should be noted too. After he has been removed, Klytaimnestra no longer heeded the singer’s restraining advice.

Considering the emphasis placed upon the disregarded warning, it should come as no surprise that this element is a consistent part of the other narratives of *tisis* in the poem. This stage has a characteristic term: ἀτασθαλίας, “recklessness.” With this term, discussion of the warning stage has lead us back to the intratextual connections that help define *tisis*. Different instances of the same stage across different *tisis* narratives are linked by shared diction. In the present discussion of this chapter, I focus on the diction particularly salient for the “Oresteia” *tisis* narrative. In the next two chapters, I look more closely at the intratextual connections between different instances of *tisis* articulated by typical diction.

ἀτασθαλίας, “reckless deeds” or “recklessness” (always appearing in the plural) are a characteristic term of stage two. The term is part of a complex of words connected to the noun ἄτη and verb ἀάω. (The relationship of these terms is probably etymological, but the details are disputed.⁵⁰) Douglas Cairns and Alan Sommerstein have recently argued that ἄτη (and related terms) has as its core meaning “harm.”⁵¹ It is well known that ἄτη has two senses, an objective—that is, “ruin,” the objective fact of a disaster—and a subjective—that is, “folly,” a mental impairment leading to disaster.⁵² In its subjective sense, ἄτη is again ambiguous. A speaker can use it to describe an exogenous cause of mental impairment and thus exculpate someone who acted under its influence (or at least mitigate his guilt). Agamemnon’s apology in *Iliad* 19 is the famous case. He is not to blame—“I am not culpable” (οὐκ αἰτιός εἰμι, 86)—Agamemnon argues, for his self-destructive quarrel with Achilles; a goddess—Ἄτη personified—did it—“the goddess brings

50. See Beekes (2010) s.vv. ἀάω and ἄτη. For further bibliography, see also Cairns (2012) 1–2.

51. Cairns (2012), Sommerstein (2013).

52. On the connection between the two senses, Cairns (2012) 7 writes, “Most often, *atē* as a state of mind is the cause of *atē* as a state of affairs”; cf. Sommerstein (2013) 3, who notes that in Homer the two senses are usually combined and viewed as a “whole process” beginning in infatuation, leading to an act of folly, and concluding in disaster.

to completion all things” (θεὸς διὰ πάντα τελευτᾷ, 90). But ἄτη can also describe an endogenous and culpable cause for an agent’s offense. In *Iliad* 9, Agamemnon accepts Nestor’s indictment for starting the quarrel with Achilles—“I myself do not deny it” (οὐδ’ αὐτὸς ἀναίνομαι, 116)—and is willing to recompense Achilles—“I am willing . . . to give unlimited compensation” (ἐθέλω . . . δόμεναι τ’ ἀπερείσι’ ἄποινα, 120). The inconsistency between Agamemnon’s positions in these passages is a topic of much debate. Cairns’ solution seems sensible: ἄτη is an “elusive and flexible term” which “lends itself to rhetorical manipulation.”⁵³ As suits his purpose at the moment, Agamemnon can appeal to ἄτη either to accept blame (but mitigate its seriousness) or to reject blame.

ἄτασθαλῖαι are different. Though connected to ἄτη and other terms (including the adjective ἄτασθαλός, from which ἄτασθαλῖαι derive), the term ἄτασθαλῖαι has come to have a particular and almost technical meaning in Homeric diction distinct from its cognates. Unlike ἄτη, it always connotes moral censure. It is culpable error, made heedless of known destructive consequences. This description fits all eleven occurrences of the noun in both poems.⁵⁴ Zeus’ reference to ἄτασθαλῖαι at 1.34 makes Aigisthos’ example a programmatic case. Hermes’ embassy provided Aigisthos with the knowledge of the devastating consequences of his action. And yet, “though he knew sheer destruction” (εἰδὼς αἰπὺν ὄλεθρον, 37), Aigisthos still committed the crime. Because, as Zeus sees it, Aigisthos knew that his own death would inevitably result from his crimes, he takes an active role in bringing down his own punishment upon himself. Zeus emphasizes Aigisthos’ agency by using the verb for retribution in the active voice—ἀπέτεισεν—making Aigisthos its grammatical subject. And with this emphasis on Aigisthos’ agency comes also an emphasis on his responsibility. Furthermore, because the warnings that create opportunities for agents to commit ἄτασθαλῖαι predict future

53. Cairns (2012) 48. There is also an apparent internal contradiction between saying a god caused an agent to do wrong and the agent still making amends for it. Cairns (2012) 17 carefully argues that ἄτη can function in such circumstances “as a means of dissociating one’s ill-advised actions from the overall image of the kind of person one wishes to be taken to be.”

54. *Il.* 4.409, 22.104, *Od.* 1.7, 34, 10.437, 12.300, 21.146, 22.317, 416, 23.67, 24.458. For important discussions of ἄτασθαλῖαι, see Jaeger (1933) 197: “The instance of foreknowledge, of evil deeds done with an informed will, seems essential for the latter [ἄτασθαλῖαι].” Friedrich (1987) 392 agrees that a warning is essential to ἄτασθαλῖαι, but he adds to this the availability of a “path for alternative action.” (See also Newton [2010] 234 n. 62.) Perhaps all situations where characters exhibit ἄτασθαλῖαι have this element of opportunity to choose to do otherwise, but, on my reading, such considerations are secondary: what matters is foreknowledge of consequences. See Danek ad 1.32–43: “Aigisthos’ ἄτασθαλῖα consists not only in his act, but also in the fact that he does it against his better judgment.” For a somewhat different (but compatible) view, see Clay (1983) 37, who emphasizes the apologetic function of ἄτασθαλῖαι. See also Finkelberg (1995a), Bakker (2013) 114–19, 123–24; Alden (2017) 316–19.

events, they often are voiced by prophetic figures or seen in signs. The force of the model of *tisis* is such that, as in the case of Hermes' warning, the *Odyssey* includes reference to prophetic figures who have little history in the tradition or role in the poem apart from providing the basis for stage two of a *tisis* narrative. To be clear, the term ἀτασθαλῖαι does not always occur during the second stage of a *tisis* narrative, but the conceptual framework it articulates is always present. The key element here is a warning of destructive consequences. Finally, as I mentioned earlier, one further consequence of ἀτασθαλῖαι is that it collapses the diachronic separation between offense and punishment, as is typical of negative reciprocity: Aigisthos, through his ἀτασθαλῖαι, effectively willed his own destruction at the same time he killed Agamemnon.

2.5 *Conclusion: A Comprehensive Approach to tisis in the Odyssey*

I have argued in this chapter that negative reciprocity (*tisis*) is central to the design of the *Odyssey*. In the *Odyssey*, *tisis* is best examined using multiple interpretative tools. Prophetic warnings make it so that when characters choose to commit offenses they, in effect, elect at the same time to suffer retribution as well: Aigisthos chose his own death. The key term marking this idea in the *Odyssey* is ἀτασθαλῖαι. The language of *tisis* appears almost exclusively in speeches, in which characters use it to make moralizing interpretations of events. This highlights how identifying a harmful attack as actually an act of retaliation in answer to an earlier attack is a choice made by an interested agent. This choice to treat a harm returned as *tisis* depends on making the reciprocation as equivalent as possible to the initial attack. In Orestes' case, we see this at the level of diction, with killing echoing killing.

PART II

Three Narratives of Divine Vengeance

There is a vengeance from the gods . . .

—ALCMAN, *Partheneion*

IN THE LAST CHAPTER, we saw how the poet makes Orestes' *tisis* narrative the prototypical example of revenge. I must stress that Orestes' *tisis* is a paradigmatic ideal: no other example of *tisis* in the *Odyssey* matches it in every detail. We might conceptualize this as Orestes' *tisis* forming a center of gravity around which other instances circle and toward which they are pulled. Furthermore, no two instances of *tisis* are identical. This is inevitable since, whenever an agent applies the narrative pattern of *tisis* to a different situation, the context is always different, to lesser or greater degree. And the poem shows itself attuned to the implications of context, the space in which each line, each phrase lives. Thus, the poet uses the *tisis* pattern with some variety, highlighting or minimizing certain elements for artistic effect as suits the nuances of context. Among the several examples of *tisis* in the poem, the most thematically important is Odysseus' retribution against the suitors. First, however, closer study of other cases of *tisis* in the poem will help to explicate some of the main ideological and narrative aspects of *tisis*. Connected to these aspects of *tisis* are some theological questions that have been the source of much controversy in Homeric scholarship.¹ Paying attention to *tisis* will reveal often overlooked, darker aspects of Zeus.

Odysseus and his companions twice encounter divine wrath on their way back from Troy. Odysseus is the cause of a third wrath when Poseidon seeks *tisis* from the Phaiakians after they transport Odysseus to Ithaca. In this chapter, I examine in detail these three *tisis* narratives, and I briefly discuss a fourth—Odysseus' revenge upon Polyphemos.² Before proceeding with this analysis, I should note that

1. One such controversy, which, however, I do not explore, is whether justice is similar in kind and practice among the gods as among humans. In brief, I agree with Allan (2006) 8–9, who argues for an “isomorphism” between divine and human societies. There are, nonetheless, some important differences to be respected: perhaps most significantly, divine figures by definition cannot die, either as initial victims to be avenged or as targets of vengeance (cf. *Il.* 22.20). For this reason, a literal correspondence of killing for killing is impossible, but various symbolic equivalences are.

2. I examine Hephaistos' *tisis* upon Ares and Aphrodite and the kin of the suitors' (attempted) *tisis* in later chapters: see pp. 156–57, 206.

the episode on Thrinakia would seem to duplicate the one on the Cyclops' land. An angry divinity, closely connected with nature (Helios with the sun/Poseidon with the sea), aggrieved by some offense against a favorite (the Cyclops/the cattle), afflicts Odysseus with suffering and causes a delay in his return to Ithaca. To have both episodes in the poem might seem redundant: either could have been sufficient motivation for Odysseus' delay in reaching his home. And perhaps some proto-*Odyssey* had only one angry divinity in the wanderings. (So runs the argument of certain influential analytical scholars.³) But in the *Odyssey* as we have it, there are two. If one alone would have been sufficient, then we have all the more reason to look for the artistic merits of including both. Indeed, these episodes contrast with and complement each other in important ways. (So have unitarian scholars argued against the analysts.⁴) The poet—or, at least, the poet of the poem we have—has tied together these divine wraths, as we shall see, through chains of causation in the narrative and through intratextual echoes. He has integrated both into one artistically coherent poem. Furthermore, just as the similarity of Aigisthos and the suitors invites auditors to compare these parallel agents, the poet also invites his audience to interpret these gods and their two *tisis* narratives against one another.

Both the analytical and the unitarian perspective have some validity. The language surrounding the actions of Poseidon and Zeus in these episodes is different, characterizing the agents differently, and pointing toward a dissimilarity in the nature of the justice they each mete out. The companions' position as just victims of an avenging god would seem to be diametrically opposed to Odysseus' unmerited suffering at the hands of a spiteful god. But on the other hand, these differences of diction disguise a deeper similarity. How speakers and agents disguise these differences has important implications for the place of *tisis* in the poem.

3.1 *Retribution as Justice: The tisis of Zeus*

Though Odysseus' *tisis* against the suitors dominates the plot of the poem, the first intimations of retribution come in the proem and, surprisingly, involve another agent (1.6–9):

3. According to this thinking, these wraths are the work of (at least) two different poets. Usually in this interpretation, Helios' wrath is derivative of Poseidon's. Since both are individually thought to be sufficient, then, for reasons of economy, only one must be original: e.g., Kirchhoff (1879) 292–314, von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff (1884) 145, Schwartz (1924) 318–19, Pfeiffer (1928) 2361–62, von der Mühl (1940) 731, Schadewaldt (1958) and (1960) 861—with further bibliography. To be clear, some analysts emphasize certain differences—a moral character to Helios' wrath, for instance—but, in the last resort, they consider the final poem that resulted from this layering to be inferior.

4. E.g., Heubeck (1954) 72–78, Fenik (1974) 208–30 (with some reservations), Segal (1994) 195–227, Cook (1995) 15–48.

ἀλλ' οὐδ' ὥς ἐτάρους ἐρρύσατο, ἰέμενός περ·
 αὐτῶν γὰρ σφετέρῃσιν ἀτασθαλίῃσιν ὄλοντο,
 νήπιοι, οἳ κατὰ βοῦς Ὑπερίονος Ἥελίοιο
 ἥσθιον· αὐτὰρ ὁ τοῖσιν ἀφείλετο νόστιμον ἡμάρ.

*But even so he could not protect his companions, though he longed to.
 For they perished by their own recklessness—
 fools—who ate the cattle of Hyperion Helios.
 So he took from them the day of their return.*

As presented here, the agent of *tisis* is Helios. And yet, as I discuss in more detail later, this is not an accurate characterization of how events transpire, at least according to Odysseus' version of them in Book 12. There we find Zeus executing *tisis* against the companions. Regardless, already in these few lines from the proem, the poet is using the conventional diction of *tisis*, succinctly telling a narrative of retribution. Odysseus' companions, though forewarned (as ἀτασθαλίῃσιν denotes), commit an offense that elicits a retributive response. They thus die as the avenger reestablishes the just order. By applying the structural and intratextual methods I presented in the last chapter, certain aspects of this episode, as well as significant connections to other episodes of *tisis*, come into new focus.

The structure of this narrative can be represented diagrammatically using the sequential-stage model (see table 3.1).

Table 3.1 The Zeus-Companions *tisis* Sequence

Order	Event/State	
	Zeus' <i>tisis</i> Sequence	Generic <i>tisis</i> Sequence
1	Helios has left his herd on Thrinakia.	Background conditions: master is absent.
2	Companions ignore warnings from Teiresias, Circe, and Odysseus.	Unheeded warning: grounds for ἀτασθαλῖαι.
3	Eurylochos plots; Odysseus falls asleep.	Plotting and preparation I: for the precipitating offense.
4	The slaughter and eating of the cattle.	Precipitating offense.
5	Lampetie informs Helios of the slaughter; Helios pleads with Zeus.	Plotting and preparation II: for the retributive act.
6	Zeus sends a storm and destroys the ship.	Retributive act.
7	Companions have atoned; Helios remains in the land of the living.	New conditions: former order is restored.

The elements of the background stage to this narrative appear in Circe's warning to Odysseus (12.127–36). Two nymphs, Lampetie and Phaëthousa, the daughters of Helios, watch over the herds of immortal cattle and sheep. Their mother, Neaira, has stationed them on the island, “far off” (τηλόθι, 135), which implies the absence of their parents, as does Lampetie's later mission to inform Helios of the crimes that have transpired (374–75). This arrangement provides the opportunity for Odysseus' companions to commit their transgression and conforms to the established pattern for *tisis*. The poet is interested in keeping to this narrative pattern; or, put differently, the example of Orestes pulls other instances of *tisis* into alignment with it. As a result, the force of the motif of the master's unwitting absence while the offense is plotted requires that the poet constrain Helios' abilities of perception in this episode, contrary to his depiction elsewhere as all-perceiving. Even a mere fifty lines earlier, Odysseus had said Helios “sees all things and hears all things” (πάντ' ἐφορᾷ καὶ πάντ' ἐπακούει, 12.323); Teiresias also described Helios in the same words (11.109). On both occasions, these characterizations come in the context of warnings not to eat the cattle: Odysseus and Teiresias are implying that Helios is sure to know it if the companions did eat them.⁵

As I discussed in the last chapter, ἀτασθαλίας denotes reckless indifference in the face of a warning of certain retribution. The reference to the companions' ἀτασθαλίας in the proem (1.7) is particularly sharp: not only is the companions' role emphasized with two possessives (αὐτῶν . . . σφετέρῃσιν), expanding the language of ἀτασθαλίας to fit a whole line, but this is virtually the only time in either Homeric poem where a word based on the stem ἀτασθαλ- appears outside of “character-language.”⁶ These terms are inflected with moral censure, typically voiced by one character indicting another. Likewise, the narrator condemns the companions with an exclamatory interjection—“fools” (νήπιον, 8). This is an early indication of the narrator's moralistic bias that becomes increasingly important. It is also evidence of the obligatory presence of a narrating agent whenever diction connected with *tisis* is used. We may also note that the proem is oddly selective in singling out just this one episode. The proem extrapolates from the single ship lost at Thrinakia to include all of Odysseus' companions who perished since they departed from Troy. Far more died at the hands of the Laistrygonas.

5. Cf. *Il.* 3.277: πάντ' ἐφορᾷ καὶ πάντ' ἐπακούεις. The scholium ad 12.374 reads ἐναντίον τοῦτο τῷ “Ἡέλιος δ' ὅς πάντ' ἐφορᾷ καὶ πάντ' ἐπακούεις.” Cf. also *Il.*, 14.344–45, where Zeus says that Helios “light is the keenest at perceiving” (καὶ ὀξύτατον πέλεται φᾶος εἰσοράσθαι).

6. De Jong xii, ad 1.32–43 notes that of 30 examples only one is not in direct speech: *Od.* 21.146, on which see n. 12 later. See also Griffin (1986). Finkelberg (1995a) 16–21 has claimed that the term ἀτασθαλίας is essentially morally neutral, but see Cairns (2012) 37–39.

But the incident at Thrinakia stands out as the one occasion in which Odysseus is the least to blame and the companions the most culpable.⁷

As Odysseus and his companions approach the island, he recalls the warnings he had received from Teiresias and Circe (12.266–69; cf. 11.105–17, 12.127–41). On the basis of these, Odysseus issues clear commands three times—first to avoid the island (12.271–76), and then, twice, not to harm the cattle (12.297–302, 320–23). These repetitions further underline the companions’ culpability in their own demise—the only parallel to this accumulation of warnings is the abundance of warnings the suitors receive. In response to Odysseus’ first command, Eurylochos inverts both the specific advice Circe and Teiresias had given Odysseus and the conventional terms of warning. Odysseus was warned to “leave [the cattle] unharmed and mind your return” (ἀσινέας **ἔαας** νόστου τε μέδῃαι, 11.110, 12.137); Eurylochos complains that Odysseus “is not letting us step on the land” (οὐκ **ἔαας** γαίης ἐπιβήμεναι, 12.282). Besides the inversion implied by the repetition of **ἔαας**, Eurylochos’ demand to stop on the island is a rejection of returning immediately. There are resonances here with the Lotus-eaters episode: led by a compulsion to eat, Eurylochos ignores his nostos.⁸ Eurylochos, however, claims they must stop to avoid the danger of sudden winds: at the island, one “might escape sheer destruction” (ὑπεκφύγοι αἰπὺν ὄλεθρον, 287). This is a bit of antiphrastic irony, since Eurylochos turns out to be disastrously wrong.⁹ Zeus will send winds that prevent their departure from the island (312–15, 325–26) and destroy their ship—even though Eurylochos downplays the power of the gods over weather (290).

There are ironic intratextual connections to the phrase ὑπεκφύγοι αἰπὺν ὄλεθρον, for it connects the companions to two agents in two other *tisis* narratives in a way Eurylochos does not intend (though perhaps Odysseus, as narrator, does). First, Zeus portrays Aigisthos as “knowing his sheer destruction” (εἰδὼς **αἰπὺν ὄλεθρον**, 1.37) after being warned by Hermes. Second, Eurylochos’ phrase links the companions with the suitors, since, in all the other examples of the collocation of the verb (ὑπεκ)φεύγω with the object αἰπὺν ὄλεθρον in the *Odyssey* (1.11, 9.286, 12.446, 17.47, 22.43, 67), the suitors

7. Buchan (2004) 3 calls this “a particularly violent synecdoche.” The selectivity of this statement is an ancient *zetema*: see the scholia ad 1.7. See especially Rüter (1969) 49–52; see also Cook (1995) 16–18, Grethlein (2017) 205–6, 213, and Walsh (1995) 385–86 nn. 1–5 for further bibliography.

8. γαίης as object of the verb ἐπιβαίνω occurs three other times in the *Odyssey*: twice for returning home safely (7.196, 23.238) and once for stopping at the land of the Lotus-eaters (9.83). As Bakker (2013) 129 notes, the companions are depicted as “mindlessly compulsive eaters.”

9. On “antiphrastic ironies” of this sort, see Bonifazi (2012) 72–83.

are the only other ones who *fail* to “escape sheer destruction.” (The suitors’ doom is emphasized by negating the verb: οὐ φεύξεσθαι [22.67].) Most strikingly, like other victims of *tisis*, Eurylochos does not heed the warner, but he and the other companions “heed black night” (πειθόμεθα νυκτὶ μελαίνῃ, 291)—an unusual and, therefore, marked usage of πείθω in the *Odyssey*.¹⁰ There is significant irony in Eurylochos’ response, and in Odysseus’ response and second warning, the ironies multiply.

Odysseus also uses the language of ἀτασθαλίας in his second warning to them not to eat the cattle (12.298–302):

ἀλλ’ ἄγε νῦν μοι πάντες ὁμόσσετε καρτερὸν ὄρκον·
 εἴ κέ τιν’ ἦέ βοῶν ἀγέλην ἢ πῶϋ μέγ’ οἰῶν
 εὖρωμεν, μή ποὺ τις ἀτασθαλίῃσι κακῇσιν
 ἢ βοῦν ἢέ τι μῆλον ἀποκτάνῃ· ἀλλὰ ἔκηλοι
 ἐσθίετε βρώμην, τὴν ἀθανάτη πόρε Κίρκη.

300

*But, come, now all of you swear a strong oath for me:
 if ever we find any herd of cattle or great flock of sheep,
 let no one with evil recklessness
 kill a cow or sheep; rather, at your ease
 eat the food that immortal Circe provided.*

300

By issuing the previous warning and now having them swear an oath, Odysseus is creating a situation that has underappreciated depths of irony. It is only through the warning that Odysseus is at this moment in the act of giving that his companions acquire the knowledge of the doom that is certain to fall on them should they eat the cattle. Odysseus’ warnings, in their various iterations, caution that on Thrinakia “there is a most terrible evil for us” (αἰνότατον κακὸν ἔμμεναι ἄμμιν, 12.275) and that they should not eat the cattle, “lest we come to harm” (μή τι πάθωμεν, 321). These admonitions provide the condition for the emergence of the companions’ ἀτασθαλίας—that is, they give the companions the foreknowledge of the consequences of their actions that makes them particularly blameworthy. The companions might still have committed the offense of eating the cattle, but their actions would not have amounted to ἀτασθαλίας, and any punishment they faced would need to have been justified on different terms.¹¹

10. This is the only case in the *Odyssey* where πείθω in the middle voice takes a dative object that is not either an agent or a verbal message. The construction does occur in the *Iliad*: e.g., 12.502.

11. Perhaps we can push the point further. With an ironic circularity, it is Odysseus’ warnings, which he gives in order to protect his companions, that let Zeus destroy them in response

This illustrates as well a more general point about ἀτασθαλῖαι: it can only exist as an intelligible concept within the context of a larger narrative—a narrative of *tisis*—that provides a logical sequence of events to frame the actions of the agents involved. In other words, ἀτασθαλῖαι only exist as a retrospective judgment on the character of agents once the final results of their actions can be seen. This post factum aspect of the application of the concept of ἀτασθαλῖαι is evident, among other places, in the proem (1.7) and in Zeus' condemnation of Aigisthos (1.34–35), where both the narrator and Zeus ascribe this trait after their respective narratives have finished.¹² But in his warning to Eurylochos and his companions, Odysseus ascribes this trait to a hypothetical violator proleptically before any crime has been committed. And it is important to note Odysseus does so in direct speech: he purports to have used this language at that moment, before they came to the island. Both the poet's audience and Odysseus' know full well that this threatened doom will occur: the proem proclaims as much to the poem's auditors at the outset; to the Phaiakians, Odysseus' state as a solitary wanderer implies the same. Odysseus is likewise in a position of superior knowledge: even at the moment he is admonishing his companions, he knows that ignoring his warning means their certain death. Properly speaking, a mortal should not be able to know this and escape the bounds of the poem's linear narrative. But Odysseus has stepped outside the limits normally imposed on humans by traveling into Hades and learning from Teiresias, as well as from the divine source Circe, the secret truths of the course of his life and the outcome for the companions should they eat Helios' cattle. And thus, from this privileged position of knowledge, Odysseus can

to Helios' plea (12.376–83) while still upholding the principles of justice he articulated in his opening speech. Odysseus' warnings effectively require Zeus to punish the companions. We might even say that, in his attempt to save his companions, Odysseus causes their destruction. Had Teiresias and Circe not warned Odysseus, and Odysseus not warned the companions, they would not have perished on account of ἀτασθαλῖαι. They might still have been killed, but their deaths would have a rather different moral inflection. The close juxtaposition in the proem of Odysseus' desire and attempt to save his companions (1.5–6) with their death by their ἀτασθαλῖαι (7) hints at the narrative and causal connections between the two. Buchan (2004) 134, 155–61 makes the provocative claim that Odysseus has a repressed desire to kill his companions. In the Thrinakia episode, Buchan draws out what he sees as malicious negligence on Odysseus' part, who gives his companions "every opportunity to show their infamous *atasthalia*" (157). Others have remarked on what they see as various shortcomings of Odysseus' warnings: Fenik (1974) 212 n. 126, Schadewaldt (1960).

12. Apart from the apparently proleptic use at 12.300, the only other case of proleptic reference to ἀτασθαλῖαι is at 21.146, but this is best thought of as the narrator's retrospective indictment (like 1.7). For a different interpretation, see de Jong ad 1.32–43.

warn his companions in terms of ἀτασθαλίας, proleptically adopting a retrospective posture.¹³

There is another possible explanation for how Odysseus can cite ἀτασθαλίας in this passage, one that complicates his actions even further. Odysseus is, of course, relating the entire scenario retrospectively to the Phaiakians. He is, doubtless, giving his own subjective version. How closely it matches an objective account of what happened cannot be known, and in an important sense there is no objective historical version of a mythic tale anyway.¹⁴ But it is possible Odysseus has adapted his own speech after the fact, inserting a reference to ἀτασθαλίας in order to underscore his companions' culpability and his own blamelessness. Wolfgang Schadewaldt came to almost the same conclusion—only, as an analyst, he believed the reference to ἀτασθαλίας was an interpolation by a later, moralizing poet designed to make the companions' deaths fit the *paradeigma* of Aigisthos.¹⁵ But perhaps Odysseus is, in a sense, Schadewaldt's moralizing poet. After all, Alkinoös explicitly compares him to an epic poet (αἰοιδός) because of his narration of the *apologoi* (11.368). Like all narrators, Odysseus has freedom to portray events as he sees fit, within the bounds of what he can get his auditors to accept. And as the sole survivor, he need not worry about the Phaiakians having any competing narrative. Odysseus has every reason to frame events this way. He has to deal with the problem of convincing the Phaiakians that he really is not to blame for the deaths of the previous sailors who were helping him get home. The Phaiakians would be much less likely to convey Odysseus home if he posed a danger to past (and future) shipmates. Odysseus, therefore, reassures his potential helpers that it really was the companions' fault and not his own that they perished. And Odysseus' ploy works: he gets the Phaiakians to help him get home—even though the crew of the Phaiakian ship will die at the hands of a god, just as the companions did. Even the poem's auditors are reliant upon Odysseus' words for almost all the details of the *apologoi*. And if Odysseus has retrospectively interpolated reference to ἀτασθαλίας, this also casts Eurylochos' reference to Odysseus' own ἀτασθαλίας—also as reported after the fact by Odysseus—in a different light. (More on this speech to come in the next section.)

13. Cf. Bakker (2013) 118–23, who notes Odysseus' and his audience's retrospective knowledge of the outcome of Polyphemos' prayer and Odysseus' sacrifice of Polyphemos' ram. We may also cite the several instances of narratorial commentary by Odysseus that underline his retrospective vantage point (e.g., 12.295): see de Jong (2001) 225–27. On the special kind of knowledge available in the underworld from Teiresias, see Gazis (2018) 108–15.

14. Odysseus' reliability as a narrator of the *apologoi* has received much more attention recently: see Parry (1994), Zerba (2009), and Hopman (2012).

15. Schadewaldt (1960), esp. 867–68.

Odysseus' companions prepare for their crime chiefly by engaging in "hateful speech" (στρυγερῶ . . . μύθῳ, 12.278) and "evil counsel" (κακῆς . . . βουλῆς, 339). Just as Aigisthos persuades Klytaimnestra to break her obligations to marital fidelity (3.263–64), Eurylochos manages to convince the others to break the oath they gave Odysseus (298–302) and join in the crime (294, 352). Also important to their preparation is Odysseus' falling asleep and his consequent inability to counter the destructive influence of Eurylochos as he had previously done (10.244–73, 10.429–48). In this situation, Odysseus is parallel to the anonymous poet that Agamemnon had set as a guard over his wife and whom Aigisthos removed to a desert isle (3.267–71). Both could speak with authority to dissuade the conspirators from participating, and with both out of the way the crime could commence.

The companions' criminal slaughter of the cattle amounts to a breakdown of the distinction between the categories of human and animal.¹⁶ As the companions lower themselves through their perverted ritual and the cattle are elevated as special objects of Helios' affection (12.380), we can see a structural analogy between the cattle and Odysseus' companions, so that the death of one is equivalent to the death of another. The poet draws out the correspondence between the slaying of the cattle and the companions' deaths in Helios' petition for Zeus' vengeance (12.377–83):

Ζεῦ πάτερ ἡδ' ἄλλοι μάκαρες θεοὶ αἰὲν ἔόντες,
 τίσαι δὴ ἑτάρους Λαερτιάδew Ὀδυσῆος,
 οἳ μὲν βοῦς ἔκτειναν ὑπέρβιον, ἦσιν ἐγὼ γε
 χαίρεσκον μὲν ἰὼν εἰς οὐρανὸν ἀστερόεντα,
 ἡδ' ὁπότ' ἄψ' ἐπὶ γαῖαν ἀπ' οὐρανόθεν προτραποίμην.
 εἰ δέ μοι οὐ τίσουσι βοῶν ἐπιεικέ' ἀμοιβήν,
 δύσομαι εἰς Αἶδαο καὶ ἐν νεκύεσσι φαίνω.

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*Father Zeus and you other blessed gods who are eternal,
 take vengeance on the companions of Odysseus son of Laertes,
 who violently murdered my cattle in which I*

16. See Vernant (1979), who pairs this episode with the story of Cambyses' sending spies to learn about the Table of the Sun (Hdt. 3.17–26). According to Vernant, Helios' cattle have an elevated, divine status; the companions lower themselves through their corrupted, sacrilegious feast, so that each companion "cesse d'être un homme" (249), and they all die "comme des bêtes" (248). Bakker (2013) 101–108 also emphasizes the special status of the cattle, which "stand for birth and death, renewal and change," and eating which is "a sure invocation of death" (106). The companions pervert the ritual and perform, in the words of Vidal-Naquet (1970) 1289: "un anti-sacrifice." See also Vernant (1979) 243, Nagler (1990) 339–40, Bakker (2013) 106–107.

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*used to take delight as I went into the starry sky
and when I turned back to the earth from the sky.
If they will not repay me a fitting requital for the cattle,
I will descend into Hades and shine among the dead.*

The content of Helios' demand is that the companions pay a "fitting requital" (ἐπιεικέ' ἀμοιβήν) for the cattle. ἀμοιβή is not a typical Homeric word for retribution. Its associations are with reciprocal giving. In Book 1, Telemachos offers to Athena (in disguise) a guest-gift before she departs, which she does not wish to wait around on Ithaca to accept. She says that she will return later and receive it then, promising in addition that there would be in the future for Telemachos something "worthy . . . of requital" (ἄξιον . . . ἀμοιβῆς, 1.318). Later, Athena (again in disguise) prays to Poseidon that he give a "gracious requital . . . for the glorious hecatomb" of the Pylia (χαρίεσσαν ἀμοιβήν . . . ἀγακλειτῆς ἐκατόμβης, 3.58–59). The second passage is a little peculiar, with one god praying to another and yet fulfilling her own prayer (62). Nonetheless, both demonstrate that in Homeric usage ἀμοιβή typically signals a positive reciprocal exchange—in other words, a counter-gift that is delayed and not commensurate. But Helios, by using ἀμοιβή in this context and stressing how it is "fitting," is drawing on another tradition of usage that connects ἀμοιβή with retribution. Hesiod uses the term to describe the divine retribution that comes upon an impious man (*Op.* 333–34):

τῷ δ' ἦ τοι Ζεὺς αὐτὸς ἀγαίεται, ἐς δὲ τελευτὴν
ἔργων ἄντ' ἀδίκων χαλεπὴν ἐπέθηκεν ἀμοιβήν.
*Against this man, Zeus himself is surely angry, and in the end
he will make a harsh requital in return for his unjust deeds.*

This passage emphasizes the final position of the act of retribution. It comes "in the end," as a final, retrospective part of a narrative sequence, given "in return for" evil done.

Helios similarly demands immediate, equal reciprocation, in keeping with the ideology of negative reciprocity. In doing so, he is rejecting the positive reciprocity that Eurylochos, in order to persuade the companions to slaughter the cattle, had claimed he would build with the god (12.340–51):

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*κέκλυτέ μεν μύθων, κακά περ πάσχοντες ἐταῖροι·
πάντες μὲν στυγεροὶ θάνατοι δειλοῖσι βροτοῖσι,
λιμῷ δ' οὔκτιστον θανέειν καὶ πότμον ἐπισπεῖν.*

ἀλλ' ἄγετ', Ἡελίοιο βοῶν ἐλάσαντες ἀρίστας
 ῥέζομεν ἀθανάτοισι, τοὶ οὐρανὸν εὐρὺν ἔχουσιν.
 εἰ δέ κεν εἰς Ἰθάκην ἀφικοίμεθα, πατρίδα γαῖαν,
 αἰψά κεν Ἡελίῳ Ὑπερίονι πίονα νηὸν
 τεύξομεν, ἐν δέ κε θεῖμεν ἀγάλματα πολλὰ καὶ ἐσθλά.
 εἰ δέ χολωσάμενός τι βοῶν ὀρθοκραϊράων
 νῆ' ἐθέλῃ ὀλέσαι, ἐπὶ δ' ἔσπωνται θεοὶ ἄλλοι,
 βούλομ' ἄπαξ πρὸς κύμα χανὼν ἀπὸ θυμὸν ὀλέσσαι
 ἢ δηθὰ στρεύεσθαι ἐὼν ἐν νήσῳ ἐρήμῃ.

Listen to my speech, companions, though suffering evils.
All deaths are loathsome for wretched mortals,
but to die and meet one's fate by hunger is most pitiable.
Rather, come, driving off the best of the cattle of Helios,
let us sacrifice them to the immortals who occupy wide heaven.
And if ever we should arrive at Ithaca, our fatherland,
we will straightaway build a rich temple for Hyperion Helios
and in it we would put many noble offerings.
But if, having become angry at all over the straight-horned cattle,
he wish to destroy the ship, and the rest of the gods follow,
I would rather, having gulped at a wave, lose my life in one moment,
than over a long time waste away on a desert island.

Eurylochos exhorts the companions to satisfy their hunger through sacrificing the cattle to the heavenly gods. Eurylochos, in fact, does not mention eating the cattle in his exhortation, only sacrifice. Of course, sacrifice generally implies eating by the participants and whenever a Homeric hero slaughters cattle for food he also makes an offering to the gods. But Eurylochos emphasizes the offering. (As mentioned earlier, the ritual comes off poorly anyway.) In addition, when Eurylochos further promises to found a temple for Helios on their safe delivery home and fill it with gifts, he is trying to create a relationship of positive reciprocity with Helios. He is offering a future counter-gift of a different kind in exchange for taking of the cattle in the present. Eurylochos frames the exchange as mutually beneficial. However, he is perverting the conventions of positive reciprocity by offering to give Helios a temple for the cattle, when, normally, a mortal should expect to receive a benefit from a god for a sacrifice.¹⁷ One effect

17. See Bakker (2013) 106. The only other place in Homer where ἀγάλμα appears in the plural (also with πολλά) is in a similarly impious thank-offering: Aigisthos' sacrifice and dedication after killing Agamemnon (3.273–75).

of this perversion of the conventions of both reciprocity and ritual actions is that it makes the companions' offer seem hollow, as if they knew killing and offering the cattle was an empty gesture and that they needed to provide a real gift. In addition, Eurylochos' final argument—that a quick death at sea is better than a slow one from hunger on land—admits the possibility that the sacrifice and the promise to build a temple might be ineffective. In any event, the companions will receive a gift (of a sort) in return—their destruction. Helios rejects the terms of the exchange as Eurylochos envisions it. Instead, he demands that Zeus obtain immediate and commensurate reciprocation: *tisis*. Two different ways of conceptualizing the exchange are in conflict. It is up to Zeus to decide whose narrative will win out, and he decides for Helios. There is a note of irony in Eurylochos' preference for a hypothetical swift death over a prolonged one—an antithesis marked by the emphatic use of ἄπαξ and then δηθά near the beginning of lines 350 and 351. Instead of the delayed reciprocation of a future temple that Eurylochos offers, Helios will seek a prompt (and violent) reciprocation, which Zeus will “swiftly” (τάχα, 387) grant.

In his demand for vengeance, Helios puts particular stress on the need that his recompense be a “fitting” (ἐπιεικέ, 382) exchange for his cattle. His metonymic use of the single word βόων (382) in place of a full description for how the cattle are killed would suggest a payment in exchange for the loss (e.g., by theft or purchase) of cattle. As it is, Helios does receive his “fitting” requital—only, since he (and the characters who issued warnings) has cast the loss of his cattle as a “killing” (ἐκτεῖναν, 380), the payment that fits this loss is death. The same symmetry that exists between Aigisthos' killing Agamemnon and Orestes' killing Aigisthos holds in this case as well: Zeus kills the companions just as they killed the cattle. In both cases, as we would expect with negative reciprocity, there is a strong tendency toward a calculated reciprocation—perhaps even stronger in the case of Helios.

Encouraged by the parallels between Poseidon and Helios, as well as by the poem's brief allusion, many scholars have characterized the Thrinakia episode as “Helios' revenge.”¹⁸ But from a structural point of view, Zeus plays the part of avenger in this *tisis* narrative. The form of Helios' prayer casts Zeus as the subject of the imperative τίσαι (“take vengeance,” 12.378). Zeus agrees to take on this role, stirring up a storm and destroying Odysseus' ship with a lightning bolt and thereby killing all the remaining companions (403–419; 5.131–33). The poet

18. E.g., Segal (1994) 215 and Fenik (1974) 209, who also compares Helios' prayer to Poseidon's pleading with Zeus for the Phaiakians to be punished: “two scenes in which an angered god confronts Zeus and wins his permission to punish those who have done him wrong.” Note how Fenik has made it sound as if Helios executes the punishment. Cf. Grethlein (2017) 236: “Like Poseidon, he avenges a violation of his honor . . .”

emphasizes the particular agency of Zeus in this act of retribution by having Odysseus report the conversation of Zeus and Helios in a near violation of the so-called Jörgensen's law—that is, Odysseus, being mortal and limited in his knowledge about divine matters, ought not to know anything about this conversation.¹⁹ But the poet is at pains to make clear that when Odysseus tells of the destruction of his ship and attributes it to Zeus (12.399, 415–17), he is not referring to Zeus in the general way that mortals do when they attribute unexplained events to “a god” or “Zeus” when they have no real knowledge of the agent behind the action. The poet has Odysseus comment that he heard about the conversation from Calypso, who heard it from Hermes (12.389–90). The poet has not only made the unusual choice of having a mortal narrate a divine council, but it has even drawn attention to the uniqueness of this act by having Odysseus offer an explanation for how he came to know what happened. (The apparent oddness of this passage has led numerous scholars since antiquity to excise it.) This has the effect of making Odysseus' narration of the destruction of his ship 25 lines later true even at the level of the particular identification of Zeus as the divine agent behind it, where normally a mortal's narrative of such an event would exclude the possibility of such a secure identification.

Zeus' manner of taking *tisis* parallels Poseidon's wrath against Odysseus: Poseidon similarly stirs up a storm against Odysseus that nearly kills him in retribution for Polyphemos' blinding (5.282–464). Before setting out from Ogygia on his raft, Odysseus affirms he that will persevere even “if again some one of the gods smites me upon the wine-dark sea” (εἰ δ' αὖ τις ραίησι θεῶν ἐνὶ οἴνοπι πόντῳ, 5.221). The particle αὖ underscores an implicit connection Odysseus is drawing between the destructive storm he faced at the hands of Zeus that landed him on the island and the possibility of new divinely wrought troubles on the sea—which, in fact, will soon commence. Furthermore, Odysseus recognizes Zeus' role in the destruction of his ship when he narrates his journeys to Penelope, saying his ship's loss came at the hands of Zeus (23.329–32). He also affirms Zeus' part when, disguised, he tells her his lying tale that comes rather close to the truth of his plight—that he lost his ship and companions because “Zeus and Helios hated him” (δδύσαντο γὰρ αὐτῷ Ζεὺς τε καὶ Ἥελιος, 19.275) on account of the companions' killing the cattle. Only in one place in the poem does anyone claim that Helios is the sole or even primary agent of retribution for the eating of his cattle: the proem.

The proem states that Helios “took from them the day of their return” (αὐτὰρ ὁ τοῖσιν ἀφείλετο νόστιμον ἡμέρα, 1.9). Though the proem attributes the

19. Jörgensen (1904).

action to Helios by way of the anaphoric pronoun *ὁ*, the figure of Zeus lurks in the background.²⁰ As Jim Marks has argued, Zeus is conspicuously absent from the proem, just as Odysseus is only allusively signified by the mere, anonymous “man” (*ἄνδρα*, 1.1).²¹ Furthermore, the resonance of the phrase *ἀφείλετο νόστιμον ἡμᾶρ* hints at Zeus. When Eurykleia bemoans the fate of Odysseus, she claims Zeus “hated” (*ἤχθηρε*, 19.364) him and imagines he “took away the day of his return” (*ἀφείλετο νόστιμον ἡμᾶρ*, 369). On her interpretation of events, Zeus must be responsible if Odysseus has perished. Her viewpoint serves to further the audience’s developing interpretation of the role that Zeus plays in the *Odyssey*—in particular, his role as avenger. Thus, the proem’s attribution of the death of the companions solely to Helios is selective and perhaps even biased. If we were to try to harmonize the proem’s description of the event with its fuller narration in Book 12, we might say that the proem considers Helios’ petition a significant enough act to be described as “he took away” their return. But such an interpretation would significantly twist the usual sense of the verb *ἀφαιρέω*. Elsewhere in the *Odyssey*, the poet uses it for direct actions, and often for deadly force (12.64, 22.219). At 1.9 the poet presents Helios as the agent of revenge, in contrast to his depiction elsewhere. This inconsistency is part of the poet’s program of presenting a more moral view of Zeus. Wrath—human or divine—is very often an important topic in an epic proem. The poet of the *Odyssey* wants to distance Zeus from that traditional motif (for the time being) and so has substituted Helios. Only after the poem’s auditors have received a fuller picture of the events on Thrinakia and they can understand that Zeus acted not out of personal animosity but out of a more objective inclination to uphold the principles of justice does the poet permit Zeus to take on the role of agent of retribution in earnest. To name Zeus at this early point would import into the *Odyssey* unwanted shades of a wrathful Achilles or Apollo of the *Iliad* or Athena of the nostoi tradition (Proclus, *Chrestom.* 279–82; *Od.* 4.502).

Finally, there is no reason Helios could not have acted as the agent of revenge, but, as we saw earlier with regard to his supposed omniscience, his powers are represented as more limited in this episode.²² For this reason, we cannot resort

20. Note as well that several scholiasts considered this pronoun vague enough that they needed to provide a gloss for it of *ὁ Ἡέλιος*.

21. Marks (2008) 3–4. He does not, however, note the difference in the purported agent of retribution against the companions, which would strengthen his case. Marks has shown Zeus’ dominant role in the plot of *Odyssey*, which he reads as a device to “conceptualize Panhellenic narrative paths” (5, *passim*).

22. It is worth adding that, according to some other traditions, Helios is perfectly capable of exacting violent revenge under his own power: in a myth Aelian, *NA* 14.28 preserves, Helios

to actorial motivation to explain why Helios does not act on his own. One effect of making another god take vengeance on behalf of Helios is that the structure for a narrative of *tisis* of three distinct roles—avenger, avenged, and recipient/victim—is maintained and strengthened. Or to look at it differently, the pull of the paradigm of Orestes' *tisis* is such that the poet has made Helios, who is normally capable of executing his own retribution, dependent in this case upon another for satisfaction. Because Helios, unlike Agamemnon or Odysseus, is an immortal god, we might have expected *tisis* executed on his behalf to look different from the prototypical model. But, for the most part, this turns out not to be the case. One key difference between *tisis* narratives that have humans in the role of avenged and those that have gods in that role is that gods, of course, cannot die. No attack on the honor of Helios can result in his death, and therefore no *tisis* narrative could involve retribution for Helios' murder. From one perspective, the companions harm Helios through attacking his possessions (his cattle). To this extent, their attack is like the suitors' assault upon Odysseus.

The result of this narrative of *tisis* is that Zeus preserves his conception of *δίκη*, the proper cosmological and moral order of the universe. Helios had threatened to descend into Hades and “give light” (*φαεῖνω*, 12.383) among the dead, thus turning upside down the natural order. Hades is where, by mythological and poetic convention, the light of Helios does not reach. To die is to be no longer able to see the light, but to live is to be under it.²³ Helios' descent would threaten the stable opposition between the dead and the alive, just as the companions' slaughter of the divine cattle had: the cattle, after having become “meat . . . both cooked and raw” (*κρέα . . . ὀπταλέα τε καὶ ὠμά*, 12.395–96), still squirmed and bellowed. Zeus' *tisis* reestablishes the proper natural and moral boundaries. Helios remains in the land of the living and transgressions stemming from *ἀτασθαλίας* against divine regulations are punished.

Zeus' *tisis* against the companions on behalf of Helios thus follows the pattern of the paradigm of Orestes. The correspondence is not exact, but it is revealing. On a structural level, we see the same seven narrative stages, though this time Helios occupies a position that has features of both being the avenged and a petitioner. At an intratextual level, there are numerous linguistic connections to other *tisis* narratives—especially in the prominent use

out of nemesis against Nerites (Poseidon's *ἐρώμενος*) changed him into a “spiral-shelled fish” (*κόχλος*). Retributive metamorphosis is not foreign to the *Odyssey*: cf. Poseidon's petrification of the Phaiakians' ship (13.159–64).

23. When dead: 4.540, 833, 10.498, 14.44, 20.207; when alive: 11.619 (*αὐγὰς ἠελίοιο*); in the *Iliad*, *φάος* is often connected with salvation (e.g., 6.6). See also Bakker (2013) 109–13.

of ἀτασθαλίας. As regards the three important features of negative reciprocity, this narrative shows aspects of temporal collapse in how Odysseus refers to the companions' ἀτασθαλίας before they commit their crime and in how Helios seeks immediate recompense rather than delaying it until the companions return to Ithaca. There is also a strong equivalence between the "fitting requital" (ἐπιεικέ' ἀμοιβήν) and the initial crime. As in every case where a punishment might fit a crime, the correspondence is not perfect, but in this narrative the correspondence is pushed along the scale toward identity. Helios rejects a more dissimilar recompense of a new temple and pursues a more similar one of death for death. Finally, we have also seen how different characters use rhetoric to define the terms of the reciprocal exchange. Odysseus minimizes his responsibility; Eurylochos tries to create a positive reciprocal relationship; however, in the end, Helios and, most especially, Zeus have ultimate control over the narrative and define the terms of the exchange. They determine what constitutes a just exchange.

3.2 *Retribution Disguised: The "tisis" of Poseidon*

The second major revenge narrative involving divine agents in the poem is Poseidon's against Odysseus. Though the poet does not give this narrative the prominent place he gives the narrative of *tisis* for the cattle of Helios, it is the principal explanation for Odysseus' delayed return. As such, it is a crucial touchstone for questions about Odysseus' ethical position and the role of *tisis* narratives in the structure of the poem. While in the Thrinakia episode the agent of retribution is Zeus (and not Helios), by contrast, the agent of retribution for the blinding of Polyphemos is Poseidon himself. Even when Poseidon petitions Zeus in his anger against Odysseus, as when he comes before Zeus and demands that the Phaiakians must be punished for their aid to Odysseus (13.128–38), he alone executes his violent revenge (13.159–184). Though Poseidon evinces personal animosity toward Odysseus (see 1.68–79, 5.282–90, 13.125–38), he, like Orestes and Zeus, is still performing retribution on behalf of another, namely Polyphemos. The strict parallel between the two narratives with respect to the roles of avenger-avenged-recipient is Zeus-Helios-companions and Poseidon-Polyphemos-Odysseus.

One objection to placing this narrative of retribution alongside the other instances of the *tisis* theme confronts my analysis at its outset. As Charles Segal has pointed out, "Poseidon never mentions justice."²⁴ Poseidon, Segal claims, is not motivated by a sense of a higher moral order, of *tisis* or δίκη. In

24. Segal (1994) 217–18, 220.

a similar fashion, Bernard Fenik has characterized both Helios' and Poseidon's anger as manifestations of the common motif of "the more or less arbitrary persecution of a mortal by an angry deity," inconsistent with the moralizing *paradeigma* of human suffering that Zeus establishes in the proem (1.32–43).²⁵ Fenik's "more or less," however, covers a wide range of possible responsibility. While by some reckonings Poseidon's wrath may be excessive, it is hardly without motive. Zeus, in his opening council with Athena, connects Poseidon's animosity directly with Odysseus' blinding of Polyphemos, stating that Poseidon "is angry because of the Cyclops, whose eye [Odysseus] blinded" (*Κύκλωπος κεχόλωται, ὃν ὀφθαλμοῦ ἀλάωσεν*, 1.69); likewise, Teiresias tells Odysseus in Hades that Poseidon "is angry because you blinded his son" (*χωόμενος ὅτι οἱ υἷὸν φίλον ἐξαλάωσας*, 11.103; cf. 13.343).

Poseidon's wrath, thus, is neither unintelligible nor arbitrary. Yet Segal's claim remains true: the poet never per se calls Poseidon's persecution of Odysseus an instance of *tisis*. But this is not due to an objective evaluation of the merits of the case against Odysseus, as Segal implies.²⁶ Rather, this results from a choice on the part of the speakers who tell of Poseidon's revenge to eschew the readily available narrative pattern of *tisis*, which, if used, would reckon the troubles and tribulations of Odysseus' lengthy voyage home as just punishment. Indeed, Athena, Odysseus, and the narrator cite Poseidon's anger in ways that exculpate Odysseus in contrast to those who suffer fittingly, such as Odysseus' companions. As I discuss in more detail in chapter 4, this practice is in keeping with the poem's overt program of presenting Odysseus as a sympathetic, model figure. And yet, though the poem has granted Odysseus a privileged moral position as protagonist of the epic, the plot of his encounter with Polyphemos and its aftermath does exhibit aspects that can be construed as a *tisis* narrative. The speakers favorably disposed to Odysseus never use this narrative pattern. Even Poseidon—as the narrator portrays him, it must be noted—avoids the diction of *tisis*. And if, as I argue, the set of events neatly matches the pattern expected of a *tisis* narrative, the avoidance of an explicit mention of the theme is conspicuous. In many places, it lurks just beneath the surface, barely hidden and ready for detection by an audience whose perception of patterns of retribution has been prepared by the *paradeigma* of Orestes' *tisis*.

25. Fenik (1974) 216: "It is impossible to justify Odysseus' suffering at the hands of Poseidon in terms of Zeus' explanation of guilt and punishment in the prologue" (211).

26. Segal (1994) 217–19: "Odysseus had committed no crime in punishing the Kyklops, and the god is merely holding a bitter grudge," acting out of "anthropomorphic, personal animosity." In contrast, Helios' wrath is "carefully motivated" and "has a moral structure." But note that at 13.144 Zeus attributes *tisis* to Poseidon in connection with his punishment of the Phaiakians.

One more objection has been raised, most recently by Jonas Grethlein, to grouping the wraths of Poseidon and Helios together with the *tisis* Aigisthos faces. Grethlein argues that Poseidon and Helios act for “the defense of personal honor,” not on behalf of “the establishment of justice.”²⁷ This is said to be different from the abstract principle of justice that Zeus upholds and that operates in the narrative of Aigisthos. However, Aigisthos is also punished in part for an offense against personal honor—Agamemnon’s and Orestes’ honor—as the companions and Odysseus are. Zeus, after all, is not the one who executes revenge upon Aigisthos; Orestes is. Zeus is, however, the agent of revenge in the Helios episode, aligning that case of *tisis* more closely with the abstract principle of justice of the opening of the poem. Thus, these three cases of revenge are more alike than is sometimes acknowledged.²⁸

The narrative of Poseidon’s *tisis* against Odysseus can be diagrammed as follows (see table 3.2):

Table 3.2 The Poseidon-Odysseus *tisis* Sequence

Order	Event/State	
	Poseidon’s <i>tisis</i> Sequence	Generic <i>tisis</i> Sequence
1	Polyphemos is absent from his cave. Odysseus enters.	Background conditions: master is absent.
2	Companions advise fleeing. Odysseus is not persuaded.	Unheeded warning: grounds for ἀτασθαλίας.
3	Odysseus plots and prepares to deceive and blind Polyphemos.	Plotting and preparation I: for the precipitating offense.
4	Odysseus and companions blind Polyphemos, steal his stores and sheep.	Precipitating offense.
5	Polyphemos prays to Poseidon.	Plotting and preparation II: for the retributive act.
6	Poseidon makes Odysseus wander. Companions perish.	Retributive act.
7	Odysseus is lost. Poseidon’s and Polyphemos’ honor upheld.	New conditions: former order is restored.

27. Grethlein (2017) 234.

28. In a recent essay, Christensen (2018) takes a psychological angle and sees a diversity of perspectives on agency and responsibility represented in the poem. In Christensen’s analysis

The narrative is set in motion by Odysseus' choice to travel from "Goat Island" to the land of Cyclops (9.166–76), which coincides with Polyphemos' absence from his cave. Polyphemos, like Agamemnon, has left his home (216–17), which now lies open for strangers to occupy.

Against the wishes of his companions, Odysseus wants to remain, see the Cyclops for himself, and receive "guest-gifts" (ξείνια, 229; cf. 266–68). His companions attempt to dissuade him from this plan (224–27), in effect, warning him. In Odysseus' recounting of events, he does not frame their advice as a clear warning, like the one he would give them about eating Helios' cattle.²⁹ To do so would imply some responsibility for the wandering that results from the encounter. Rather, he casts their advice simply as an alternative course of action and presents the consequences of rejecting their advice in understated terms: to heed his companions "would have been much better" (ἀν πολὺν κέρδιον ἦεν, 228), because Polyphemos "was not going to be desirable to the companions, when he appeared" (οὐδ' ἄρ' ἔμελλ' ἐτάροισι φανεῖς ἐρατεινὸς ἔσσεσθαι, 230). While in retrospect recognizing the soundness of his companions' advice, he justifies his rejection of it at the time: he wished, he claims, to establish a civilized guest-friendship (ξείνη) based on the exchange of "guest-gifts" (ξείνια). Such a relationship would morally elevate their appropriation of the Cyclops' goods from mere piracy—a form of negative reciprocity—to a benevolent, positive reciprocity.³⁰ Nonetheless, the diction of Odysseus' refusal betrays a formal and ethical similarity to Aigisthos' rejection of Hermes' advice, both signified by the contrastive adverb ἀλλά introducing the failure of persuasion (οὐ πείθειν). Odysseus states, "but I did not heed [them]" (ἀλλ' ἐγὼ οὐ πιθόμην, 228), just as Zeus claims of Hermes, "but he did not persuade the mind of Aigisthos" (ἀλλ' οὐ φρένας Αἰγίσθοιο πείθ', 1.42–43). Odysseus says that he did not know whether the inhabitants of this land were "violent, wild, and unjust" (ὕβρισταί τε καὶ ἄγριοι

(see esp. 8–9), Odysseus comes to reject the view that he is an object of divine wrath and to realize his own responsibility and agency. Compare Grethlein's (2017) 242 view that the different views on offer in the poem capture a wider picture of the human existence of suffering and responsibility.

29. According to Grethlein (2017) 233–34, Odysseus does not receive a warning like the one Aigisthos receives. In addition, Poseidon acts out of personal slight, rather than a concern for justice in general, as Zeus does in the case of Aigisthos. However, we should recall that Odysseus is presenting the narrative and is not free of bias. Christensen (2018) 16 sees Odysseus' admission that he made a poor choice here as sign of later "regret" and "change in character."

30. The custom of *xenia* in this episode, especially as related to a dialectic of nature vs. culture, has received ample attention: Kirk (1970) 162–71, Redfield (1983), esp. 237–38, Most (1989), esp. 21–25, Reece (1993) 123–43, Calame (1995) 139–73, esp. 169–71, which builds on Calame (1977a) and (1977b), Bakker (2013) 25–26, 33–34, 54–55.

οὐδὲ δίκαιοι, 9.175) or “guest-loving and god-fearing” (φιλόξεينوι, καί σφιν νόος ἐστὶ θεουδής, 176)—or, to put it another way, he knew there was a good chance the inhabitants would be dangerous. Odysseus also reveals he had an intuition he would encounter a “wild man who knows nothing of justice and laws” (ἄγριον, οὔτε δίκας εὔειδότα οὔτε θέμιστας, 215). For this reason, he brought provisions and the Ismaric wine that he would later use to trick the Cyclops.³¹ Establishing ξενίη with these unknown natives was chancy at best, and Odysseus’ attempt proved reckless. Here we can see another case in which one agent attempts to construct a narrative along the lines of positive reciprocity, only to have his prospective friend reject the narrative and turn to revenge. Indeed, Polyphemos ironically perverts the discourse of positive reciprocity by offering as a “guest-gift” (ξενιῆϊον) that he eat Odysseus “last” (πύματον, 369–70). Note the emphasis on finality, as is typical of negative reciprocity: to eat Odysseus last would mean to consume the whole party of Ithacans and leave no one with whom to continue the exchange with a later counter-gift. (One may also suppose that Polyphemos has something equally sinister in mind when he again offers Odysseus “guest-gifts” [ξείνια, 517] after Odysseus has escaped the cave.)

When Odysseus rejects his companions’ good advice and later suffers for it, he would appear to be acting with ἀτασθαλίας, though he never admits to it—at least directly. He only represses moral condemnation of his recklessness so far, however. Eurylochos gives voice to this negative interpretation of Odysseus’ actions, when he fears a similar misfortune at the hands of Circe (10.435–37):

ὥς περ Κύκλωψ ἔρξ’, ὅτε οἱ μέσσαυλον ἵκοντο 435
 ἡμέτεροι ἔταροι, σὺν δ’ ὁ θρασὺς εἶπετ’ Ὀδυσσεύς.
 τούτου γὰρ καὶ κείνοι ἀτασθαλίῃσιν ὄλοντο.

So indeed did the Cyclops shut them in, when to his courtyard came 435
our companions. With them followed this audacious Odysseus.
For by his recklessness they too perished.

Eurylochos attributes ἀτασθαλίας to Odysseus and claims that it is precisely on account of this moral error that Odysseus is responsible for the death of his companions. The final line of Eurylochos’ complaint has a striking resonance with the formulaic line attributing blame for the companions’ demise in the proem (1.6–7):³²

31. Grethlein (2017) 210.

32. Cf. also *Il.* 4.409.

ἀλλ' οὐδ' ὥς ἐτάρους ἐρρύσατο, ἰέμενός περ·
αὐτῶν γὰρ σφετέρησιν ἀτασθαλίησιν ὄλοντο . . .

*But even so he could not protect his companions, though he longed to.
For by their own recklessness they perished . . .*

Whereas in the proem the poet attributes the companions' deaths to their own ἀτασθαλίαι, here, the same, thematically weighty words lay the companions' deaths at the feet of Odysseus. The ἀτασθαλίαι in 10.437 are Odysseus' alone—τούτου. The singular possessive genitive occupies the same place in the line as the plural possessive genitive in 1.7—αὐτῶν—referring to the companions. In contrast to the events on Thrinakia, where the companions act against the expressed will of Odysseus, Odysseus directs every action in their encounter with Polyphemos. For this reason, Eurylochos attributes the ἀτασθαλίαι to Odysseus. And he can produce no argument against this accusation, save the threat of death (10.438–48). He knows his actions could be interpreted negatively, but he has studiously circumscribed this alternative narrative—giving it voice, but only to control and render it powerless. The accusation is doubly mediated: Odysseus places it in the mouth of a character he repeatedly portrays unfavorably (cf. 10.264–74, 12.278–352). And there can be no argument with Eurylochos' accusation. Odysseus has no response save the threat of death, checked only by the other companions (10.438–48). Whereas, in the proem, the poet extends blame for the companions' deaths from the single ship lost at Thrinakia to include, by synecdoche, all of the companions, here the poet restricts Eurylochos' charge to Odysseus' liability for only the six who died in Polyphemos' cave. Yet, as both Teiresias (11.100–37) and Athena (13.339–43) imply, Odysseus' blinding of Polyphemos is the ultimate cause of the loss of “all” (πάντας) the companions—at least since the Cyclops' prayer for revenge.³³ Despite all the calculated constraints the poem places on the scope of Odysseus' culpability, the accusation nonetheless comes through.³⁴ I examine the darker ironies in the phrase “losing the companions” in chapter 5. For now, it suffices to say that through Eurylochos we glimpse a more pessimistic interpretation of Odysseus' encounter with Polyphemos and, more generally, in his conduct

33. To be clear, Athena's remark in its context conveys her confidence and delight in Odysseus' safe arrival at Ithaca; however, she also implies that the death of the companions was an inevitable condition for Odysseus' return. He could only come home *after* he had lost them. Cf. also 2.174, 24.428.

34. In a similar way, Hopman (2012) 5 has argued for “the malleability of the Cyclops story,” whose significance can be changed to suit a speaker's goals.

with the companions. And as we shall see, the charge that Odysseus is at fault in the death of the companions does not die with Eurylochos. It reappears in the end, when Eupheithes, father of Antinoös, making none of the careful distinctions implicit in Eurylochos' charge, views Odysseus' part in the death of his companions (the Ithacans' kin) as grounds for retribution (24.421–38).

Odysseus' preparation for blinding Polyphemos consists of an extended sequence of scheming that integrates his actions with the poem's "cunning versus force" (*dolos* vs. *biē*) theme (9.299–367).³⁵ The poet uses a set of resonant terms to bring out this theme and connect it with other instances of cunning in the poem. The most prominent of such terms in this episode is *mētis*, "craft, trickery," and its cognates. The wordplay on *μη̄τις*/*μή τις*/*Οἷτις* at 406–14 highlights its significance in this narrative context. This culminates when Odysseus summarizes his success in blinding Polyphemos and escaping harm by saying his *μη̄τις* deceived Polyphemos (414). I need not rehearse the details of Odysseus' cunning in this encounter,³⁶ except to note that the diction of trickery and craftiness that Odysseus claims for himself in his telling of the encounter parallels the earlier descriptions of Aigisthos' murderous, vengeance-incurring actions. Aigisthos has the epithet *δολόμητις* (1.300, 3.198, 250, 308, 4.525), which corresponds with Odysseus' common epithet of *πολύμητις*. He "plots" the murder of Agamemnon (*ἐμήσατο*, 3.194; cf. 3.261), as Odysseus "broods over evil" (*κακὰ βυσσοδομεύων*, 9.316) against Polyphemos. He devises a "devious trick" (*δολίην*... *τέχνην*, 4.529), an ambush, as Odysseus uses trickery (*δόλος*/*μη̄τις*, 9.406, 408, 422) to ambush Polyphemos as he sleeps and to escape (immediate) reprisal. Additionally, there are other significant parallels that are apparent on a thematic level. Aigisthos uses words to deceive and corrupt Klytaimnestra (3.263); Odysseus tricks Polyphemos with wordplay. Aigisthos breaks the code of *ξενίη* by attacking Agamemnon in a feast (4.530–35, cf. 11.409–34); Odysseus attacks Polyphemos after his dinner. All told, the characterization of Odysseus' actions in this passage fits within an established verbal and thematic framework of deceitful, criminal behavior. While certainly Odysseus can use the tropes of guile to augment his own glory,³⁷ his actions do carry a darker resonance.

35. On this theme's significance in the poem (cf. esp. 9.406–408), see de Jong ad 8.266–366 and 9.100–566. The poet (and his tradition) also expresses this opposition as *mētis* vs. *biē*. The theme is also prominent in the songs of Demodokos: see Alden (2017) 200–21. For an extended reading of *mētis* vs. *biē* as "culture vs. nature," see Cook (1995).

36. See, among others, Podlecki (1961), Schein (1970), Peradotto (1990) 47: "It is *mētis* at its best: a story about *mētis*, achieved by *mētis*."

37. Segal (1994) 90–98.

The offense that Odysseus commits within this *tisis* narrative is his act of blinding Polyphemos. Although the prevailing view since Reinhardt is that Odysseus' fault in the episode—if he has any—lies in his boasting, the poem is explicit elsewhere that the cause of Poseidon's anger is the blinding of his son Polyphemos (1.68–75, 11.101–3, 13.339–43).³⁸ And the act of blinding is not *necessarily* the mere product of the exigencies of Odysseus' situation (i.e., self-defense).³⁹ The crucial point is that Poseidon, Polyphemos, and Eurylochos can interpret Odysseus' actions as immoral within the context of a certain *tisis* narrative that casts Odysseus as aggressor. Because they (especially Poseidon) can apply this narrative to these events, Odysseus suffers for his actions.

At play in this episode is a conflict of moral narratives: Odysseus, just like Polyphemos, can tell these events as a narrative of *tisis* (τεισαίμην, 9.317; τεύσατο, 479), in which he—in his own capacity (τεισαίμην, 317) or as an agent of Zeus (τεύσατο, 479)—is exacting retribution for the violence Polyphemos has done to his companions. All of the structural elements of *tisis* are present, including even a warning by a seer, Telamos, that serves only to establish Polyphemos' recklessness (506–16). This allusion has no other purpose except to situate this narrative among other, parallel *tisis* narratives that feature disregarded seers. Polyphemos displays cunning too: he tries to get Odysseus to reveal the location of his ship, “tempting” (πειράζων, 281) him. After Polyphemos eats his companions, Odysseus, in his greatest display of cunning in the poem (as discussed earlier), prepares to ambush the Cyclops and take his revenge. There is a kind of symmetry in the punishment Odysseus and his companions execute against Polyphemos, as they use the instruments of culture (a sharpened stake, fire) to avenge the natural, cannibalistic feasting of Polyphemos (9.375–400). Whereas Polyphemos made a natural, raw meal of the companions, Odysseus and his companions, in effect, cook Polyphemos' eye. This *tisis* narrative could be diagrammed as the others (see table 3.3):

38. Pace Reinhardt (1960) 64–69, Fenik (1974) 216, Friedrich (1991), Segal (1994) 201. Brown (1996) 21–22, 28–29 and Loudon (2011) 193 concur, with some reservations. For further bibliography, see Brown (1996) 6 n. 11 and n. 12. On this point, I agree with Heubeck (1954) 85: “The crime of Odysseus lies solely in the act of the blinding . . .”; cf. Grethlein (2017) 233. But see the next note.

39. Pace Heubeck *ibid.*, Lloyd-Jones (1971) 29, Fenik (1974) 210–11.

Table 3.3 The Odysseus-Polyphemos *tisis* Sequence

Order	Event/State	
	Odysseus' <i>tisis</i> Sequence	Generic <i>tisis</i> Sequence
1	(Not applicable.)	Background conditions: master is absent.
2	Polyphemos warned by seer, threatened by Odysseus. He mistakes the former, ignores the latter.	Unheeded warning: grounds for ἀτασθαλίας.
3	Polyphemos craftily inquires after their ship and origins; traps men in cave.	Plotting and preparation I: for the precipitating offense.
4	Polyphemos kills and eats six men.	Precipitating offense.
5	Odysseus plots his tricks.	Plotting and preparation II: for the retributive act.
6	Odysseus blinds Polyphemos.	Retributive act.
7	Odysseus and companions have escaped.	New conditions: former order is restored.

Odysseus labels this narrative sequence as *tisis*. Neither the poem's narrator nor Odysseus are impartial: on their telling, Odysseus' revenge is explicitly a narrative of *tisis*; Poseidon's is only implicitly so.

But why does the poem present the single act of blinding as the source of Poseidon's anger? These causal statements are succinct and selective—a single line with reference to a single act excluding the other possible reasons for his anger from the encounter, such as Odysseus' boasts, the theft of sheep and stores, and the practice of deceit. But just as the proem presents a single act as the cause of the companions' deaths—their eating of Helios' cattle—when in the course of the narrative many different causes exist for their deaths, so also does the poem (through a variety of voices) fix upon this one cause for Poseidon's anger.

One of the results of this focus is that it evokes a sense of symmetry between the offense Odysseus committed and a symbolically equivalent punishment. Undergirding Odysseus' punishment is a possible paronomasia between the verbs ἀλάομαι ("I wander") and (ἐξ)αλαόω ("I blind"). Odysseus' blinding of Polyphemos (ἀλάωσεν, 1.69) has its "natural" punishment in Poseidon's demand that Odysseus "wander" (ἀλόω, 5.377). And when Odysseus reaches Ithaca he will continue to suffer as a "wanderer" (ἀλήτης, 17.483, et al.) in his own

home.⁴⁰ Polyphemos presented Poseidon with two options for Odysseus' punishment: Odysseus should either perish and not reach Ithaca (9.530–31) or, failing that, arrive late and in a bad state (532–35). Whatever the reason for Poseidon's choice of the lesser retribution—whether compelled by Zeus or fate or freely choosing this punishment—his selection suggests a symbolic symmetry between the offense of blinding and the punishment of wandering.

The device of paronomasia has clearer examples in the poem, especially in Book 9: for example, the *μή τις/μητις* pun (9.405–14) and the several puns on the name of Odysseus (*ὠδύσαο*, 1.62; *ὠδύσατ'*, 5.340; *ὀδῶδυσται*, 5.423; *ὀδυρόμενος*, 16.145; *ὀδύσαντο*, 19.275; *ὀδυσσάμενος*, 19.407).⁴¹ These two puns meet in the trick that Odysseus plays upon Polyphemos, when he uses the paronomasia of *Ὀδῆτις* in order to escape the retribution of the other Cyclops (9.364–414). However, Odysseus will not escape without woe. Poseidon "hated him" (*ὠδύσατ'*, 5.340, cf. 423). He uses Odysseus' name against him, thus symmetrically returning the same name-violence against him that he had used against Polyphemos. This phonetic correspondence signifies a deeper correspondence of talionic violence.

A cultural correspondence between blindness and wandering makes for an even stronger equivalence than a possible paronomasia.⁴² To blind someone is to render him helpless and lost. Polymestor in Euripides' *Hecuba* appears on stage blinded by Hekabe and decries his loss of direction and spatial sense: "Woe is

40. The similarity between these verbs is even closer if a reconstructed active form of *ἀλάομαι*, "I wander," is posited as **ἀλάω*, "I cause to wander," beside the active form of *ἀλαόω*, "I cause to be blind." Ultimately, both derive from a nearly identical *ἀλα-*. While some regard the root of *ἀλαόω* as **λα-* with an alpha-privative, i.e., *ἀ-λα* (*GEW* s.v. *ἀλαός*, but with some doubts), this derivation is far from certain: *Lfgre* s.v. *ἀλαός* ultimately regards the etymology as "obscure." According to Chantraine, the obscurity of this etymology may be due to a tendency for taboo replacement of words denoting physical infirmities: see *DELG* s.vv. *ἀλάομαι* and *ἀλαός*. I suggest that the root *ἀλα-*, "blind," has nothing to do with a root of **λα-*, but comes by way of taboo replacement from the root *ἀλ-*, "wander." The second alpha in *ἀλάομαι* may be due to the intensive *-α-* attached to the root. (Chantraine, *ibid.*, compares *ποτάομαι*.) Whether or not taboo replacement is involved, *ἀλαός* can derive from *ἀλάομαι* by a secondary derivation. In short, the adjective *ἀλαός* may mean, in its literal sense, "wandering." And as I am arguing, the disposition of wandering is associated with the disposition of being blind. Whether or not this etymology is accurate, however, is ultimately immaterial to the poetic effect of paronomasia, which depends on likeness of sound, not etymological relation.

41. The story of how Autolykos names Odysseus confirms that the paronomasia at 19.407 is intentional. This one secure example validates the extension of this interpretive approach to the other listed instances. The literature on the name of Odysseus is extensive. Important are Stanford (1952), Dimock (1956), Clay (1983) 54–64, Peradotto (1990) *passim*, esp. 143–70. Ahl and Roisman (1996) 28 (following Steinrück) detect a play also on the name of Zeus at 1.62, 65. On the figure of paronomasia in general in the *Odyssey*, see Louden (1995).

42. Much of my discussion of Greek attitudes to blindness is dependent on Bernidaki-Aldous (1990) 33–47.

me! Where will I go?/Where will I stay? Where will I land?” (ὥμοι ἐγὼ, πᾶ βῶ, πᾶ στῶ, πᾶ κέλσω; Eur. *Hec.* 1056–57). His whole speech centers on his loss of orientation, using interrogative adverbs of location ten times and a recurrent metaphor of a ship wandering at sea. In a similar fashion—but humorously—Polyphemos in Euripides’ *Cyclops* appears after his blinding to wander about the stage in a desperate search for Odysseus and his men, relying on the chorus for directions (Eur. *Cyc.* 682–89). Likewise, this depiction of Polyphemos holds true in the *Odyssey*, though it is less pronounced: he is lost, enfeebled, and must resort to “groping with his hands” (χερσὶ ψηλαφόων, 9.416) to make it about his cave.⁴³ The mythic figure who most typifies the connection of blindness and wandering is Oedipus, who, in Sophocles’ depiction, blinds himself and becomes an outcast wandering among the mountains (Soph. *OT* 1451, 1518), without any human contact (1436–37).⁴⁴ Deborah Steiner has argued that blindness and invisibility are in many contexts interchangeable in the Greek mind, hence the double meaning of τυφλός as both “hard of seeing” and “hard to see.”⁴⁵ With this in mind, the sense of Odysseus’ “disappearance” (his becoming ἄιστον, 1.235) on his voyage home takes on a new layer of meaning: causing Odysseus to wander, Poseidon has dealt him a form of “blindness” by making him invisible to the world.⁴⁶

The further consequences of Odysseus’ wandering—that he return home to find “woes in his home” (ἐν πύματα οἴκῳ, 9.535)—extend the parallel between the harms Polyphemos and Odysseus suffer, since the Cyclops returned to his home to discover invaders abusing the custom of *xenia* by feasting recklessly on the master’s livestock and stores.⁴⁷ It is true that the poet never makes the equivalence of blinding and wandering explicit. But if we add these further consequences of Odysseus’ wandering, we can see how Poseidon’s angry vengeance is in fact calibrated toward a parity of offense and punishment, and not an irrational, unmeasured wrath, as is sometimes assumed.

43. Buchan (2004) 34–35: “His blindness leads to a wandering, as he frantically searches both for those responsible for his loss and for allies to help him recover his loss.”

44. Blindness and exile are connected in several other myths: e.g., the case of Phoenix (Apollod. *Bibl.* 3.175).

45. Steiner (1995) 207, 210–11. To her account, I add ἀβλεψία as another word with the double meaning of “unseeing” and “unable to be seen.”

46. I could advance further connections between Odysseus’ wandering and blindness. Like Odysseus’ wandering, blindness frequently results from the anger of a god: e.g., Lykourgos (*Il.* 6.138–40), Teiresias (Apollod. *Bibl.* 3.69–72, Call. *Lav. Pall.* 53–130), Thamyras (Apollod. *Bibl.* 1.17), Stesichorus (Pl. *Phdr.* 243a), etc. Blindness appears as the penalty for crimes such as theft in our earliest evidence: a 7th century B.C. inscription from Cumae on an aryballos records, “I am the *lekylthos* of Tattaie, whoever steals me will be blind.” (Ταταίης ἐμὶ λέρυθος· ἡὸς δ’ ἄν με κλέψῃ, θυφλὸς ἔσται, *LSAG* 236, 240.3, pl. 47.3=IG XIV.865).

47. On the parallel between the suitors and Odysseus’ party in Book 9, see Bakker (2013) 72–73, though I would modify his statement to say that the suitors would not seem to be “uninvited.”

Just as Helios prayed to Zeus to set the stage for Zeus' retribution against the companions, so does Polyphemos pray to Poseidon (526–35), who will be the one to execute the vengeance. This prayer constitutes the second preparation stage of the *tisis* narrative.

The retributive act of Poseidon's *tisis* narrative is making Odysseus wander and suffer further troubles in the course of his travels. Odysseus' wanderings and Poseidon's vengeance extend even beyond when Odysseus reaches Ithaca and secures his household, since he will have to journey once again (11.119–34). A further aspect of Poseidon's retribution is the eventual destruction of the rest of the companions, which has several different proximate causes—such as Skylla or Helios' anger over his slaughtered cattle—though the ultimate cause is Polyphemos' curse, as Teiresias' prophecy makes clear. Here we begin to see how different *tisis* narratives in the *Odyssey*—Poseidon's against Odysseus, Zeus' on behalf of Helios, even Odysseus' against the suitors—implicate others. Since the companions are Odysseus' means for making a timely return, their deaths result in further wandering. Their loss has a parallel symmetry in Polyphemos' loss of his sheep, which are the nearest approximation to a community for Polyphemos. The common Homeric metaphor that makes a leader the “shepherd” of his men, along with Polyphemos' pathetic and personal address to his best ram (9.446–59), suggests a correspondence between the Cyclops' flock and Odysseus' men. Thus, as Odysseus and his men steal the sheep, Polyphemos loses his pseudo-companions. He even treats his best ram as if it could be a helper in his incapacitated state to find Odysseus (456–60). Accordingly, Odysseus faces a fitting punishment of losing his helpers for his return journey. As a result, a new and—from Poseidon's and Polyphemos' point of view—just set of conditions comes about, in which Poseidon has upheld his honor as a god by blocking Odysseus' return and making him disappear from the mortal world for his years of wandering.

In summary, the narrative of Poseidon's vengeance against Odysseus fits the established pattern. From a structural point of view, it has the same seven stages. In regards to the three points of ideology that are especially noteworthy in negative reciprocity in the *Odyssey*, the tendency toward a synchronous temporality appears relatively unimportant when compared to other *tisis* narratives. This may have to do with the nature of the “fitting” punishment, which is an extended exile from Ithaca, spanning years. It cannot be collapsed into an instantaneous retribution. When Odysseus tells the Phaiakians of Poseidon's *tisis*, he has the same transcendent point of view as he adopted when reporting the death of the companions for their eating of the cattle of Helios. Odysseus understands that he will inevitably continue to suffer the effects of Poseidon's punishment. Polyphemos had prayed that Odysseus would suffer in his own home (9.535; cf. 11.115), which he had yet to reach when he reports this to the Phaiakians. He also says that Poseidon heard the prayer (9.536)—a fact he cannot have known at the time Polyphemos made the prayer, but only inferred later once he lost his

companions and had his fate affirmed by Teiresias in Hades.⁴⁸ Thus, Odysseus is standing in the midpoint of his punishment, but already sees that Poseidon will extend its effects beyond his arrival to the shores of Ithaca.

Odysseus' exile and its consequences—losing his companions, suffering woes at home—represent a calculated equivalence between offense and punishment. This equivalence is less precise and more symbolic and suggestive than other instances of *tisis*. But its symmetry allows it to be part of the cosmic order of justice Zeus is seeking to maintain. Third, the presence of a narrating agent deciding what exchange counts as just can be felt in the way Odysseus is narrating the encounter to avoid the terminology of *tisis*. Odysseus (and his allies) do not want to frame Poseidon's wrath as justified and so eschew this rhetoric. Although, at a few moments, such as Eurylochos' indictment of Odysseus in Book 10, elements of this language slip through as if the poet is seeking to make his audience aware of the tendentious framing Odysseus is giving the account. We also see in this episode another example of the Homeric motif in which the language and ideology of positive reciprocity can be both corrupted—as when Polyphemos offers as a *ξενήϊον* to eat Odysseus last—and rejected in favor of negative reciprocity—as when Polyphemos responds to Odysseus' stated desire for *ξενίη* with violence.

3.3 *Retribution Set in Stone: Poseidon and the Phaiakians*

Poseidon is the avenger in another narrative of *tisis*. On this occasion, the Phaiakians give Odysseus plentiful gifts and conveyance home to Ithaca. By doing so, they act against the prophetic warning of Alkinoös' father, Nausithoös, who had foretold that, because Poseidon was angry with them on account of their generosity, they would face a disaster. Poseidon, therefore, after noticing that Odysseus has been safely returned to Ithaca, petrifies the ship that had left him there as it returns within sight of Scherie. He also threatens to surround the island with a mountain, which would cut them off from all future commerce with outsiders. Poseidon's motive is vengeance. (*tisis* is explicitly mentioned by Zeus at 13.144.)

The Phaiakians notice that the ship has been turned to stone and pray to avert a total cataclysm (13.185–88):

ὥς οἱ μὲν ῥ' εὖχοντο Ποσειδάωνι ἄνακτι
 δήμου Φαιήκων ἡγήτορες ἦδ' ἐμέδοντες,
 ἔσταότες περὶ βωμόν. ὁ δ' ἔγρετο δῖος Ὀδυσσεὺς
 εὖδων ἐν γαλήνῃ πατρώῃ. . .

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48. On these grounds, some have doubted the authenticity of 9.536: see M. L. West (2014) 203. On Odysseus' retrospective vantage and the designs of the gods, see Bakker (2013) 118–24.

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*So to the lord Poseidon were they praying,
the leaders and rulers of the Phaiakian people,
standing around the altar. But noble Odysseus awoke
from his sleep on his ancestral land . . .*

With this tableau the episode ends—ends mid-line and moves to Odysseus as he awakens on Ithaca. We never learn what happens to the Phaiakians. Will they be walled off from the rest of the world or allowed to remain in contact? The text does not say. This is perhaps the most abrupt change of scene in all of Homer.⁴⁹ Why does the poet leave this thread of the plot so open-ended? The answer to this question has to do with the multiple meanings and perspectives at play in this episode and with the poet's ultimate aims. Poseidon's vengeance turns out to ironically implicate other actors and narratives and even undermine his own goals. To answer the question I posed, we need to consider this *tisis* narrative in the light of other *tisis* narratives in the poem, and in particular how it maps onto the prototypical ideal of *tisis* in terms of both structure and the ideology of negative reciprocity.

Using the model from earlier, this *tisis* narrative can be diagrammed thus (see table 3.4):

Table 3.4 The Poseidon-Phaiakians *tisis* Sequence

Order	Event/State	
	Poseidon's <i>tisis</i> Sequence	Generic <i>tisis</i> Sequence
1	None stated (Poseidon is in Aigai?).	Background conditions: master is absent.
2	Phaiakians neglect the prophecy of Nausithoös.	Unheeded warning: grounds for ἀτασθαλίαι.
3	The Phaiakians prepare their ship.	Plotting and preparation I: for the precipitating offense.
4	The Phaiakians give Odysseus gifts, bring him to Ithaca.	Precipitating offense.
5	Poseidon notices and pleads with Zeus.	Plotting and preparation II: for the retributive act.
6	Poseidon petrifies the ship, threatens to enclose Phaiakia.	Retributive act.
7	Phaiakians cut off from future commerce.	New conditions: former order is restored.

49. Bowie (2013) 126, 128–29.

The Phaiakians manage to bring Odysseus and his gifts to Ithaca successfully without incident, as indeed they need to in order for the plot to advance to Odysseus' vengeance upon the suitors. As a consequence, the poet cannot have Poseidon intervene until after they have accomplished their mission. (Compare how Odysseus was only able to continue his journey home from Calypso's island when Poseidon was off among the Aethiopians [1.22–26]. And once he spotted Odysseus on his way, Poseidon stirred up a storm to destroy his raft and trouble him further [5.282–381].) In Book 13, there is no indication whether Poseidon was absent, though it would make sense of his failure to intervene prior to their arrival on Ithaca and it would match the typical form of a *tisis* narrative for the victim to be away at this point (stage one). His absence is perhaps implied by the statement at 5.381 that he had gone to Aigai. It is also possible that, since Poseidon knew and accepted Zeus's plan that Odysseus would return on a Phaiakian ship (5.288–89, 13.132–33), he could not prevent it and so did not try. In either case, it is the manner of his return—his swift, easy transport asleep and especially the wealth he brings with him—that angers Poseidon.

This narrative follows the model of *tisis* narratives by introducing a disregarded warning (stage two). Back in Book 8, before Odysseus told the Phaiakians of his wanderings and obtained their help for his return, Alkinoös had mentioned a warning that his father had made. Their magical ships are normally safe from any harm, but there is one danger to which they are vulnerable—the wrath of Poseidon (8.564–71):

ἀλλὰ τὸδ' ὥς ποτε πατρὸς ἐγὼν εἰπόντος ἄκουσα
 Ναυσιθήου, ὃς ἔφασκε Ποσειδάων' ἀγάσασθαι 565
 ἡμῖν, οὐνεκα πομποὶ ἀπήμονές εἰμεν ἀπάντων·
 φῆ ποτε Φαιήκων ἀνδρῶν περικαλλέα νῆα
 ἐκ πομπῆς ἀνιούσαν ἐν ἡεροειδέϊ πόντῳ
 ραισέμεναι, μέγα δ' ἦμιν ὄρος πόλει ἀμφικαλύψειν.
 ὥς ἀγόρευ' ὁ γέρων· τὰ δέ κεν θεὸς ἦ τελέσειεν, 570
 ἣ κ' ἀτέλεσθ' εἴη, ὥς οἱ φίλον ἔπλετο θυμῷ.

*But this I thus once heard from my father when he spoke,
 Nausithoös, who used to say that Poseidon bore a grudge 565
 against us, because we are harmless escorts for all.
 He said that someday a beautifully made ship of the Phaiakian men,
 when it was returning from a convoy on the misty sea,
 Poseidon would smash and that he would enclose our city with a great
 mountain.
 So the old man spoke. And the god may fulfill these things 570
 or they may be unfulfilled, as is dear to his spirit.*

Poseidon is already angry with the Phaiakians, and it is unclear why he not yet punished them. Most likely, his anger has not yet reached the point at which he would act upon it. Nausithoös' warning, therefore, is a prediction that someday, if they continue to act as they do, they will convey a man whom Poseidon especially hates. This will be the last straw for Poseidon, and they will suffer for it.⁵⁰

This passage is recalled in Book 13, when Alkinoös reacts to seeing the ship petrified (13.172–78):

ὦ πόποι, ἦ μάλα δὴ με παλαίφατα θέσφαθ' ἰκάνει
πατὴρ δ' ἐμοῦ, ὃς ἔφασκε Ποσειδάων' ἀγάσασθαι
ἡμῖν, οὐνεκα πομπῶν ἀπήμονές εἰμεν ἀπάντων.
φῆ ποτε Φαιήκων ἀνδρῶν περικαλλέα νῆα
ἐκ πομπῆς ἀνιούσαν ἐν ἡεροιδεῖ πόντῳ
ῥαισέμεναι, μέγα δ' ἡμῖν ὄρος πόλει ἀμφικαλύψειν.
ὦς ἀγόρευ' ὁ γέρων· τὰ δὲ δὴ νῦν πάντα τελεῖται.

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*Alas! Surely in truth the prophecy uttered long ago has come upon me,
the one my father spoke, who was saying that Poseidon bore a grudge
against us,*

because we are harmless escorts for all.

*He said that someday a beautifully made ship of the Phaiakian men,
when it was returning from a convoy on the misty sea,
Poseidon would smash and that he would enclose our city with
a great mountain.*

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So the old man spoke. And now all these things are being fulfilled.

Some ancient critics condemned the earlier passage on the grounds that Odysseus would not have told the Phaiakians his story of suffering at the hands of Poseidon if he had heard Alkinoös relate this prophecy. But other ancient critics defended the passage on the basis of the nobility of Alkinoös' character—he keeps his promises (cf. 7.189–94); in addition, noting the uncertainty of 8.570–71, they suggested he distrusted the prophecy.⁵¹ In my

50. Aristarchus read ἀγάσασθαι in 565 (and at 13.173). If this is correct, the tense matches the other infinitives in Nausithoös' reported speech so that Poseidon will not become angry until they convey Odysseus safely. On the syntax, see Garvie (1994) ad 8.565. This reading would be more economical. It would mean that the Phaiakians' habit of escorting all-comers is a problem only because it results in their transporting a particular man who is hated by Poseidon. The extant reading would mean that they have already transported men whom Poseidon hates and so already incurred a measure of his anger. See also M. L. West (2013) 196 n. 80.

51. See the scholia ad 8.564 and 567.

view, the earlier passage has the effect of underscoring both the Phaiakians' generosity—a point we shall return to later—as well as their liability for contravening Poseidon's wishes. Just as the accumulation of warnings to the companions and the suitors amplifies their blame, in a similar way, the two allusions to Nausithoös' prophecy and Odysseus' own references in his *apologoi* to Poseidon's wrath underscore the Phaiakians' liability. They are thus aligned with the suitors and companions—though only partially aligned. There is an important difference between the Phaiakians and the other two groups: they do not face the univocal moral condemnation that the suitors and companions do, since they are fulfilling an essential function of returning Odysseus to his rightful place on Ithaca, a goal determined by Zeus and supported by Athena.⁵² Perhaps for this reason they are not condemned by the language of *ἀτασθαλίαι*, although Poseidon conceivably could have done so. The motif of the disregarded prophecy, recalled after the offense, fits the pattern of a *tisis* narrative. The first line of Alkinoös' speech after he sees the ship petrified (13.172) is identical with one and only one other line in the poem: Polyphemos' opening line once he realizes Odysseus was the one who blinded him (9.507). In both cases, they recall a prophecy of retribution to come, which they had disregarded. And by interpreting the marvelous sign of the petrified ship, Alkinoös realizes he is in the middle of the fulfillment of the prophecy—"And now all these things are being fulfilled" (13.178), he says—just as Halitherses, using the identical summarizing pronouncement, interprets the bird sign in Book 2 as an indication that they were then in the middle of the fulfillment of his prophecy of Odysseus' return (2.176), which will lead to the suitors' demise.

In a divine council that is similar in form to the scene in which Helios pleads with Zeus to condemn the companions who ate his cattle (12.374–88),⁵³ Poseidon complains of the offense he suffered from the Phaiakians (13.125–38):

... οὐδ' ἐνοσίχθων 125
 λήθεται ἀπειλάων, τὰς ἀντιθέω Ὀδυσῆϊ
 πρῶτον ἐπηπείλησε, Διὸς δ' ἐξείρετο βουλὴν.
 "Ζεῦ πάτερ, οὐκέτ' ἐγὼ γε μετ' ἀθανάτοισι θεοῖσι

52. The justice of Poseidon in this episode is a point of debate. Such discussions often involve questions about Poseidon's justice more generally, on which see pp. 92–94 earlier. On this episode specifically, Rutherford (1986) 148, Friedrich (1989), Segal (1994) 218 find it inconsistent with the idea of justice articulated by Zeus in the opening of the poem; Marks (2008) 55, Bowie (2013) 125 see, as I do, a consistent pattern; Allan (2006) 18–20, emphasizing competing spheres of divine power, sees no contradiction.

53. Danek ad 13.139–87.

τιμήεις ἔσομαι, ὅτε με βροτοὶ οὐ τι τίουσιν,
 Φαίηκες, τοί πέρ τε ἐμῆς ἔξ εἰσι γενέθλης. 130
 καὶ γὰρ νῦν Ὀδυσῆ' ἐφάμην κακὰ πολλὰ παθόντα
 οὔκαδ' ἐλεύσεσθαι. — νόστον δέ οἱ οὐ ποτ' ἀπηύρων
 πάγχυ, ἐπεὶ σὺ πρῶτον ὑπέσχεο καὶ κατένευσας.—
 οἱ δ' εὐδοντ' ἐν νηὶ θεῶν ἐπὶ πόντον ἄγοντες
 κάτθεσαν εἰν Ἰθάκῃ, ἔδοσαν δέ οἱ ἀγλαὰ δῶρα, 135
 χαλκὸν τε χρυσόν τε ἄλιν ἐσθιῆτά θ' ὑφαντήν,
 πόλλ', ὅσ' ἂν οὐδέ ποτε Τροίης ἐξήρατ' Ὀδυσσεύς,
 εἴ περ ἀπήμων ἦλθε, λαχὼν ἀπὸ ληΐδος αἶσαν.”

... the earth-shaker 125
 did not forget his threats with which he had first threatened
 god-like Odysseus. And so he inquired about the plan of Zeus.
 “Father Zeus, no longer will I among the deathless gods
 be honored, when mortals do not honor me at all—
 the Phaiakians, who are even from my lineage. 130
 For now, I was declaring that Odysseus, having suffered many evils,
 would come to his home. (I never took away from him his homecoming
 entirely, since you first promised and confirmed it.)
 But they, bringing him in their swift ship over the sea,
 have set him upon Ithaca. And they gave to him gifts beyond number, 135
 bronze and gold in abundance and woven clothing,
 so much as Odysseus never would have carried off from Troy,
 even if he had returned unharmed, having obtained his allotment of loot.”

For Poseidon, the Phaiakians' offense lies in the harm they have done to his honor—more specifically, in that they left Odysseus with enormous wealth in opposition to his son's curse that Odysseus should reach Ithaca in a miserable fashion (9.534–35). Poseidon emphasizes the wealth that the Phaiakians have left with Odysseus. In fact, this seems to be his principal grievance against the Phaiakians, since he acknowledges that Zeus ordained Odysseus would eventually come home.⁵⁴ But, Poseidon implies, Odysseus is actually better off now—richer, to be precise—than he would have been had he come home unmolested, straight from Troy (13.137).

This is the first of the several ironies in this episode. Unbeknown to Poseidon, his words at the end of this passage, where he describes the gifts that the Phaiakians gave Odysseus, are an ironic echo of the message Zeus gave to Hermes back at

54. Thus Bowie (2013) ad 13.133.

the opening of Book 5. There, Zeus was instructing Hermes what he was to tell Calypso. Zeus' plan has the Phaiakians finally bring him home to Ithaca (5.36–42):

οἳ κέν μιν περὶ κῆρι θεὸν ὧς τιμήσουσι,
 πέμψουσιν δ' ἐν νηϊ φίλῃν ἐς πατρίδα γαῖαν,
 χαλκὸν τε χρυσὸν τε ἄλῃς ἐσθῆτά τε δόντες,
 πόλλ', ὅσ' ἂν οὐδέ ποτε Τροίης ἐξήρατ' Ὀδυσσεύς,
 εἷ περ ἀπήμων ἦλθε, λαχὼν ἀπὸ ληΐδος αἶσαν. 40
 ὧς γάρ οἱ μοῖρ' ἐστὶ φίλους τ' ἰδέειν καὶ ἰκέσθαι
 οἶκον ἐς ὑψόροφον καὶ ἐν ἐς πατρίδα γαῖαν.

*They will honor him greatly in their hearts, like a god,
 and they will send him in a ship to his dear ancestral land,
 having given him bronze and gold in abundance and clothing,
 so much as Odysseus never would have carried off from Troy,
 even if he had returned unharmed, having obtained his allotment of loot. 40
 For thus is it fated to him to see his dear ones and reach
 his lofty-roofed home and his ancestral land.*

Lines 38–40 are repeated almost verbatim in Poseidon's complaint to Zeus in Book 13. Poseidon, therefore, is angered that the Phaiakians have done precisely what Zeus had foretold they would, evidently unaware that this was Odysseus' "fate" (μοῖρα) all along.⁵⁵ (Poseidon was away visiting the Ethiopians when Zeus made this announcement: 5.282–83.) Poseidon admits that Odysseus was fated to make it to Ithaca eventually (13.132–33), but he had not expected it to happen this way. The Phaiakians face Poseidon's vengeance for fulfilling Zeus' plan. They are not exculpated because they served Zeus' purpose: Zeus does not stop their punishment.⁵⁶ As A. M. Bowie rightly emphasizes, the ample warnings secure the justice of their punishment.⁵⁷

55. Marks (2008) 37 notes in connection with the passage, "The perspective of Zeus, on the other hand, transcends the aims of either god [Poseidon and Athena], and his plan for Odysseus harnesses both." And, "Poseidon is allowed to pursue his own agenda, but, rather like a tragic hero, in doing so he furthers a larger design that conflicts with his own interests" (44). On the repetition of lines 5.38–40 and 11.136–38, see Marks (2008) 51–52.

56. Some critics have preferred an alternative reading to line 13.158 (discussed later) for this reason. It would make the Phaiakians escape the general destruction of the mountain brought down upon their island and not perish seemingly unjustly. Thus argue Friedrich (1989) 398, Danek ad 13.139–87. But this does not solve the problem of the equally problematic deaths of the crew of the ship, whom Zeus suggests Poseidon petrify—hardly the more moderate fate that scholars who take this view seem to think it is: *pace* Segal (1994) 218, Danek ad 13.139–87. As I argued earlier, on Zeus' ethic articulated in the opening scene, the Phaiakians are rightly condemned by ignoring warnings.

57. Bowie (2013) 124–25.

The Phaiakians carefully prepare their escort, gathering and stowing their gifts and making a place for Odysseus to rest on board (13.3–23, 64–76) (stage three). The Phaiakians' immediate offense (stage four) is their escorting Odysseus home peacefully and especially their generously enriching him, as is clear from Poseidon's emphasis on their gifts in his complaint to Zeus (135–38). But this act is also the culmination of a history of the Phaiakians' escorting travelers. Note that Poseidon had complained that the Phaiakians had made it so that Odysseus would return to Ithaca in as good a material condition as if he had been "unharmless" (ἀπήμων, 138)—in fact, Odysseus is actually better off, at least with respect to the wealth he has. This same issue of escorting travelers "free from harm" is the point of contention in Poseidon's historical grievance against them, as we learn from Nausithoös' prophecy: Poseidon is angry "because" they "are harmless escorts for all" (οὐνεκα πομποὶ ἀπήμονές . . . ἀπάντων, 8.566, 13.174). For Poseidon, it seems "harms" (πήματα) are connected with arriving home without wealth—a point I return to later.

In the divine council (stage five), Poseidon first proposes to execute his retribution by "smashing" the ship that brought Odysseus to Ithaca (13.149–52):

νῦν αὖ Φαίηκων ἐθέλω περικαλλέα νῆα
ἐκ πομπῆς ἀνιοῦσαν ἐν ἡροειδέϊ πόντῳ
ῥαῖσαι, ἵν' ἤδη σχῶνται, ἀπολλήξωσι δὲ πομπῆς
ἀνθρώπων, μέγα δέ σφιν ὄρος πόλει ἀμφικαλύψαι.

150

*Now, then, I wish to smash the beautifully made ship of the Phaiakians
as it comes back from a convoy on the misty sea,
so that they now hold back and refrain from giving escort
to men. And I wish to enclose their city with a great mountain.*

150

But Zeus proposes an alternative (13.155–58):

ὁπότε κεν δὴ πάντες ἐλαυνομένην προῖδωνται
λαοὶ ἀπὸ πτόλιος, θείναι λίθον ἐγγύθι γαίης
νῆϊ θοῇ ἵκελον, ἵνα θαυμάζωσιν ἅπαντες
ἄνθρωποι, μέγα δέ σφιν ὄρος πόλει ἀμφικαλύψαι.

155

*Whenever all the people look out from the city at the ship
as it is driven in, turn it into a stone near the shore,
one similar to a swift ship, so that all the people may marvel.
And enclose their city with a great mountain.*

155

Poseidon should turn the ship into stone, while retaining its form. He accepts this modification. As a result, the punishment (stage six) comes to symbolically reciprocate their offense. In this connection, the symbolism of petrification is

important: Poseidon punishes the Phaiakians by confirming them in their offense for eternity, like Sisyphos condemned to push his stone.⁵⁸

The symbolic appropriateness of the punishment is on display when the Phaiakians on the shore of their island react to the sight of their ship transformed (13.167–69):

ὦδε δέ τις εἵπεσκεν ἰδὼν ἐς πλησίον ἄλλον·
 “ὦ μοι, τίς δὴ νῆα θοὴν ἐπέδησ’ ἐνὶ πόντῳ
 οὔκαδ’ ἐλαυνομένην; καὶ δὴ προῦφαίνετο πᾶσα.”

*Thus was one saying, looking to his neighbor.
 “O my! Who has bound down upon the sea our swift ship
 as it was driven homeward? It was indeed completely visible.”*

The Phaiakian sailors are condemned to be “bound down upon the sea” in the unchanging form of a marvelous stone. A moment earlier, the poet had described the actual transformation: Poseidon “rooted from below” (ἐρρίζωσεν ἔνερθε, 163) the ship upon the sea. Apparently, there is a high degree of continuity between the earlier ship and its rocky replacement: when they see it at a distance, the Phaiakians say nothing about it being a stone, but instead about it being a ship fixed in place. The stone is thus seen as a ship, always traveling but never reaching home, ever just within sight of shore.⁵⁹ By cementing for an eternity the singular moment in which the Phaiakian sailors suffered punishment, Poseidon makes them an eternal sign of his *tisis*, collapsing the temporal distinction between a synchronous act of revenge and diachronic memorial of the act. The Phaiakians thus fulfill Zeus’ promise to Poseidon: “For you there is always vengeance hereafter” (σοὶ δ’ ἐστὶ καὶ ἐξοπίσω τίσις αἰεὶ, 144).

The symbolic value of petrification is borne out by the other example of human-to-stone metamorphosis in Homer: Niobe, as Achilles tells Priam near the end of the *Iliad*, continues, even in their present time, to weep for her dead children (*Il.* 24.602–17). Achilles’ language is quite explicit: Niobe, “in that place, though being a stone, broods over her sorrows from the gods” (ἐνθα λίθος περ ἐοῦσα θεῶν ἐκ κήδεα πέσσει, 617). Furthermore, though this is less explicit in the *Iliad* than in other renditions of the myth of Niobe, her tears form the stream Achelous. She is confirmed in her famous weeping for eternity.⁶⁰ Just as the Phaiakian ship will never

58. See pp. 39–40 earlier.

59. Forbes Irving (1990) 146.

60. Buxton (2009) 201: her petrification “perfectly symbolizes the speechless immobility to which her grief has reduced her.” See also Forbes Irving (1990) 145–48, who connects Niobe’s

reach the shore and perpetuate the chain of generosity and exchange that their voyage aims to accomplish, so also will Poseidon's second punitive act—walling-off the Phaiakian city—close off the Phaiakians from the world. They will no longer entertain guests, give and receive gifts, escort travelers—that is, participate in the custom of *xenia*.

Zeus had said that the purpose of the petrified ship was to “amaze” (*θαυμάζωσιν*, 13.157). And the Phaiakians are indeed amazed. But amazement is an ambiguous reaction. Only when Alkinoös sees the ship and recalls his father's prophecy does he come to interpret the sight as a warning. Interestingly enough, he manages to understand the situation correctly, even though the first sign of their prophesied doom now reflects the changed plan of a petrified rather than smashed ship. Like so many other victims of vengeance, Alkinoös realizes too late that he had been warned and would seem to be doomed. But matters are not so simple here.⁶¹ It is not, in fact, clear whether Alkinoös is too late in recognizing his wrongs. Poseidon's second act of retribution does not follow immediately upon his first. The poem's auditors do not see Poseidon enact his threat nor learn if the Phaiakians will manage to placate him.⁶² And the strikingly abrupt mid-line transition in line 187, which leaves the Phaiakians' plight unresolved, underscores this narrative tension.⁶³ Although, in another sense, it may not matter whether Poseidon fulfills his threat or not. In their attempt to assuage Poseidon, the Phaiakians pledge to forego escorting travelers (180–81). They plan to remove themselves, partly or entirely, from intercourse with

speechlessness as a stone to her offense of “boldness of speech.” For a more explicit version of the transformation, see Ovid, *Met.* 6.301–12.

61. Marks (2008) 49 suggests that Poseidon thinks the Phaiakians should have recognized the storm that landed Odysseus as having been sent by him and therefore should not have helped Odysseus. I see no indication in Poseidon's words that he thinks this. In fact, the general guest-friendly behavior of the Phaiakians is what they were warned about (13.174), not a specific incident.

62. There is a textual crux here. Aristophanes of Byzantium read *μη δέ* in place of *μέγα δέ* at 158, which makes Zeus reject Poseidon's second request: in favor of Aristophanes, see Stanford ad 13.156–58, Friedrich (1989), Cook (1995) 124, Danek ad 13.139–87, Loudon (1999) 24, M. L. West (2013) 232. Most modern editions, nonetheless, print the vulgate text *μέγα δέ*. Nagy (2001) 82–91 defends both readings as “legitimate” reflections of different phases of Homeric poetry; see also Marks (2008) 47–60.

63. A point emphasized by Peradotto (1990) 80–83. Some critics have assumed that, though it is not narrated in our poem, Poseidon will in fact enclose the Phaiakians' city: e.g., Erbse (1972) 145–48. Such critics emphasize that prophecies like this are always fulfilled. But it should be noted that the prophecy is already being fulfilled in way different from how it was first articulated, since the ship has been petrified rather than smashed; secondly, Alkinoös mentioned in Book 8 the disposition of the god as a condition in the fulfillment of the prophecy.

outsiders.⁶⁴ If the Phaiakians become completely isolated—whether by the imposition of an encircling mountain or by a self-imposed renunciation of intercourse with outsiders—they will not be able to maintain their bonds of *xenia* and obtain reciprocal gifts. This will mean that, in the case of Odysseus, he will have received a truly free gift. The Phaiakians will never be able to be reciprocated by Odysseus, as Odysseus, when he revealed his name, had indicated he would one day do (9.16–18). Ironically, Poseidon’s attempt to punish the Phaiakians for enriching Odysseus undermines his more important goal of punishing Odysseus. Odysseus has all the wealth—and even more—that he would have had if he returned from Troy “unharm’d” (ἀπήμων, 138). All the “harms” he encountered on his way home—for instance, Skylla’s attack is described as a πῆμα (12.231)—resulted in his losing all his accumulated wealth. His material goods (though not his companions) are restored and increased as if none of those harms happened.⁶⁵ In this way, the Phaiakians’ and Odysseus’ positive reciprocal exchange, based on mutual giving, becomes analogous to a negative, one-sided one based on taking, as if the Phaiakians were the victims of plundering in war.

The open-ended conclusion of the episode is a reflection of its unresolvable ironies. Different agents carry out their own purposes and try to control the meaning of events, but none (except Zeus) has the final say. Even if Poseidon controls the fate of the Phaiakians, he cannot help from undermining his other aim of punishing Odysseus. There is a final irony in the episode. When Odysseus awakes on Ithaca, he does not recognize it. As a result, he thinks the Phaiakians are “not right-minded . . . nor just” (οὐκ . . . νοήμονες οὐδὲ δίκαιοι, 13.209), since they brought him to a foreign land (211). Odysseus curses them to suffer *tisis* (13.213–14):

Ζεὺς σφeras τείσαιτο ἰκετήσιος, ὅς τε καὶ ἄλλους
ἀνθρώπους ἐφορᾷ καὶ τείνεται, ὅς τις ἀμάρτη.

64. M. L. West (2013) 232 n. 144, even though he adopts Aristophanes’ reading and thinks that the Phaiakians escape the fate threatened in line 152, agrees that “the Phaeacians still exist, but no longer in contact with the rest of mankind.” West’s interpretation would imply that their pledge to cease giving conveyance (180–81) entails ending all interaction with outsiders. Of course, if their pledge only means ceasing providing escort and if Poseidon relents, then they may maintain some other form of interaction with outsiders. The historical claim of 5th century Corcyraeans that their island previously had been the home of the Phaiakians cannot settle the question. The Corcyraeans understood themselves to have a territorial link to the ancient Phaiakians, not a genetic one. (See Thuc. 1.25.4, 3.70.4 and Bruzzone [2017] on the claimed link.) The Phaiakian people may have perished, but their island remain.

65. For further on the significance of the Phaiakians’ “harmless” conveyance, see Loney (forthcoming).

*May Zeus, protector of suppliants, take vengeance upon them—
Zeus who watches over other men also and who requites whoever does wrong.*

Two facts have escaped Odysseus. First, Zeus has already approved of, even collaborated in doing exactly what Odysseus prays for (through his suggestion of an appropriate punishment): exacting *tisis* from the Phaiakians for conveying him to the island he is on. Second, the island is actually Ithaca. There is yet a further irony: the Phaiakians are not “unjust”—at least not in the way Odysseus means it. They suffer, with the agreement of the divine patron of suppliants and strangers, for committing the offense of being too generous to suppliants seeking conveyance and so offending Poseidon.

3.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have shown how different narratives of *tisis* map onto the prototypical pattern of Orestes’ *tisis*. While following this same basic narrative structure and ideology, each has its own emphases and idiosyncrasies. While some deviations are to be expected, certain points come to the fore in all cases: disregarded warnings that substantiate the victim’s culpability, a symmetrical equivalence between offense and punishment, a collapse of temporality, a rejection of positive reciprocity for negative, and a conflict among different agents over control of the narrative. I have also shown that each of these narratives is connected to the others, so that one avenger’s act of justice might be another’s precipitating offense. Even parallel narratives that are not causally related, such as Orestes’ revenge on Aigisthos and Zeus’ on the companions, affect the meaning of each other by virtue of their juxtaposition and the intratextual echoes that link them.

This last point also illustrates an important idea about what makes the Homeric poems stand out among other archaic heroic epics—at least in the eyes of some ancient critics. Though we only know these other epics through fragments and *testimonia*, these poems and their comparison to Homeric epics have received ample scholarly discussion.⁶⁶ This discussion is at least as old as Aristotle. Aristotle thought that the Homeric epics were decidedly superior to other archaic epic poems, among other reasons, because of their narrative structure. In the *Poetics*, Aristotle remarks that, in Homer, the various events of the *Odyssey*’s core plot—recognition by allies, attacking the suitors, etc.—contribute

66. See the recent volumes by M. L. West (2013) and Sammons (2017) and the edited volume of Fantuzzi and Tsagalis (2015).

to a single goal (cf. *Poet.* 1455b21). The other epics are not like this. They are more like history, which Aristotle thinks a poor model for epic (1459a24–b2):

ὥσπερ γὰρ κατὰ τοὺς αὐτοὺς χρόνους ἢ τ' ἐν Σαλαμῖνι ἐγένετο ναυμαχία
καὶ ἢ ἐν Σικελίᾳ Καρχηδονίων μάχῃ οὐδὲν πρὸς τὸ αὐτὸ συντείνουσαι
τέλος, οὕτω καὶ ἐν τοῖς ἐφεξῆς χρόνοις ἐνίοτε γίνεται θάτερον μετὰ
θάτερον, ἐξ ὧν ἐν οὐδὲν γίνεται τέλος. σχεδὸν δὲ οἱ πολλοὶ τῶν ποιητῶν
τοῦτο δρῶσι. διὸ ὥσπερ εἵπομεν ἤδη καὶ ταύτῃ θεσπέσιος ἂν φανείη
Ὅμηρος παρὰ τοὺς ἄλλους, τῷ μὴδὲ τὸν πόλεμον καίπερ ἔχοντα ἀρχὴν
καὶ τέλος ἐπιχειρήσαι ποιεῖν ὅλον· λίαν γὰρ ἂν μέγας καὶ οὐκ εὐσύνοπτος
ἔμελλεν ἔσεσθαι ὁ μῦθος, ἢ τῷ μεγέθει μετριάζοντα καταπεπλεγμένον
τῇ ποικιλίᾳ. νῦν δ' ἐν μέρος ἀπολαβὼν ἐπεισοδίοις κέχρηται αὐτῶν
πολλοῖς, οἷον νεῶν καταλόγῳ καὶ ἄλλοις ἐπεισοδίοις οἷς διαλαμβάνει
τὴν ποιήσιν. οἱ δ' ἄλλοι περὶ ἓνα ποιοῦσι καὶ περὶ ἓνα χρόνον καὶ μίαν
πρᾶξιν πολυμερῆ, οἷον ὁ τὰ Κύπρια ποιήσας καὶ τὴν μικρὰν Ἰλιάδα.

For just as there was chronological coincidence between the sea battle at Salamis and the battle against the Carthaginians in Sicily, though they in no way converged on the same goal, so in a continuous stretch of time event sometimes follows event without yielding any single goal. Yet probably most poets do this. That is why, as I said earlier, Homer's inspired superiority over the rest can be seen here too: though the war had beginning and end, he did not try to treat its entirety, for the plot was bound to be too large and incoherent, or else, if kept within moderate scope, too complex in its variety. Instead, he has selected one section, but has used many others as episodes, such as the catalogue of ships and other episodes by which he diversifies the composition. But the others build their works round a single figure or single period, hence an action of many parts, as with the author of the *Cypria* and the *Little Iliad*.⁶⁷

Rather than constructing the *Odyssey* in chronological sequence like a historical chronicle of events, from before Odysseus set out for Troy to the final settlement with the kin of suitors (cf. 1451b22–30), Homer restricts the plot of the poem to a narrow timeframe, from right before Odysseus leaves Ogygia to the final settlement. The brilliance of Homer, according to Aristotle, is that he interjects “episodes” from earlier in Odysseus’ life into the poem. What Aristotle means by “episodes” (ἐπεισόδια) is debated, but if we try to think of passages analogous to the one example Aristotle gives from the *Iliad* (the Catalogue of Ships), we come

67. The text and translation are taken from Halliwell (1995).

up with incidents like the encounter with the Cyclops or the return stories told by Menelaos in Book 4.⁶⁸ These are passages that are not causally connected to the narrowly defined plot: Odysseus can get from Ogygia to his victory over the suitors without us hearing about his defeat of the Cyclops. And yet these passages are still essential for the artistic effect of the whole poem. Aristotle says they “diversify” (διαλαμβάνει) it. By this, he may simply mean they give the poem the requisite size and variety an epic needs.⁶⁹ Regardless of what Aristotle thinks the function of such episodes is, he testifies that they are typical of the Homeric poems, in contrast to most epics (1459a29), and that Homer is “of divine voice” (θεσπέσιος) for this reason. This means that the kinds of juxtapositions, layerings, and interlockings of revenge narratives that I have shown are operating in the *Odyssey* would have stood out.

Drawing on Aristotle, Marco Fantuzzi has argued that, while the Cyclic poems and the Homeric poems were both built “of many parts” (ἐκ πλειόνων πράξεων, 1462b8–11; cf., πολυμερῆ, 1459b1), they were not unified, with these parts subordinated to a central plot.⁷⁰ The Cyclic epics did contain some nonchronological digressions.⁷¹ Fantuzzi takes an example from the *Cypria* of four digressive narratives told by Nestor, apparently in succession—all of which seem tangentially linked to the Trojan War (Proclus, *Chrestom.* 114–17)—and argues that by comparison the digressions in the Homeric poems were more tightly linked to the main plot.⁷² From Aristotle’s perspective, the poet of the *Odyssey* innovated in how he presented Odysseus’ career by interjecting narratives that throw the main

68. Cf. 1455b20–25. On the meaning of “episodes,” see Halliwell (1998) 259 n. 10. I follow the interpretation of Heath (1989) 49–55.

69. Thus Heath (1989) 54.

70. Fantuzzi (2015) 410–16.

71. See esp. Rengakos (2015) 157–60; see also Marks (2010).

72. See Fantuzzi (2015) 416 and Sammons (2017) 58 n. 100. Whether the digressions in the Cyclic poems truly were not unified with the main plot is debated. For a different view, see Marks (2010) and Sammons (2017). Though Sammons (2017) 56–61 argues that the Cyclic epics handled digressions in a sophisticated way, he acknowledges that the four *paradeigmata* spoken by Nestor—the only certain examples of *paradeigmata* in the Cyclic epics—would, on their face, appear of little relevance to their wider context. Regardless, my argument here is mostly concerned with Aristotle’s contrasting views of the Cyclic and the Homeric epics. The degree to which this interpretation holds for the archaic epics themselves, apart from the filter of Aristotle, is another question, on which there are differing views. Some scholars have assumed this to be the case: e.g., Kakridis (1949) 91, Notopoulos (1964) 35–41. According to Photius, Proclus thought that the Epic Cycle was characterized by its sequentiality, “the orderly sequence of actions in it” (τὴν ἀκολουθίαν τῶν ἐν αὐτῷ πραγμάτων, Phot. *Bibl.* 319a32–33). See Fantuzzi and Tsagalis (2015) 1–2, 32–33, who think Proclus’ assessment is mostly accurate for the archaic poems. Similar, Rengakos (2015) esp. 157, 162 stakes out a middle position, seeing some poems of the Cycle as more “chronographic” and others as less.

thread of the poem in a different light. When Odysseus indicts, schemes against, and attacks the suitors, his actions take on a different cast when they come after the episode on Thrinakia that resulted in the deaths of the companions, justified in much the same language. The connections among the different narratives can create irony. Perhaps some amount of irony and shading of meaning would have been possible had the poet followed a strictly chronological structure. But some ironies are impossible apart from the non-chronological structure the poet follows, such as when Odysseus, now alone with his crew dead, portrays himself warning his crew about the cattle of Helios. One of the greatest achievements of the poet of the *Odyssey* is to give complexity and irony to narratives of revenge through interjecting parallel episodes that resonate with the main plot of the poem.

Odysseus' Terrifying Revenge

*To hell, allegiance! vows, to the blackest devil!
 Conscience and grace, to the profoundest pit!
 I dare damnation. To this point I stand,
 That both the worlds I give to negligence,
 Let come what comes, only I'll be reveng'd . . .*

—HAMLET, IV.v

THE CENTRAL *TISIS* narrative in the *Odyssey* is Odysseus' own vengeance against the suitors. The poet increases the gravity of it by repeatedly alluding to the violence to come, while withholding it until Book 22. In the same way, Odysseus himself carefully bides his time and waits for the moment that his attack will have maximum effect. Once it finally commences, Odysseus' retributive assault on the suitors is devastating.

To get a sense of how the execution of Odysseus' revenge would have affected the minds of an ancient audience, it is worth a brief look at a passage from Plato. Socrates, as Plato tells it in the *Ion*, chose the moment right before Odysseus shoots his first victim, Antinoös, to illustrate the power that epic poetry can have to move a poet and his audience to ecstasy (*Ion* 535b–c). Socrates mentions a few other moments with similar power—Achilles' rushing at Hektor, the pitiful condition of Andromache, Hekabe, or Priam—but Socrates describes the opening of Odysseus' revenge in the most detail, and it is the only passage from the *Odyssey* he mentions. Paraphrasing *Odyssey* 22.1–4, Socrates asks the rhapsode Ion about his state of mind “whenever you sing of Odysseus leaping upon the threshold, becoming manifest to the suitors, pouring forth arrows before his feet” (τὸν Ὀδυσσεά ὅταν ἐπὶ τὸν οὐδὸν ἐφαλλόμενον ἄδῃς, ἐκφανῇ γιγνόμενον τοῖς μνηστῆρσι καὶ ἐκχέοντα τοὺς οἰστοὺς πρὸ τῶν ποδῶν, 535b3–5). Socrates asks whether it drives the singer to imagine himself there, on the spot in Ithaca. Ion agrees, and takes it further: in moments of pity, he is moved to tears; in moments of “fear or terror” (φοβερὸν ἢ δεινόν, 535c7), his hair stands on end and his heart skips. (Odysseus' revenge is clearly a case of the latter.) And Ion says he sees the same reaction in his audience. Moreover, the terror the rhapsode and his audience

feel is not on behalf of Odysseus; rather, they feel fear at Odysseus' imminent onslaught, anticipating and sympathizing with the suitors' own "pale fear" (*χλωρὸν δέος*, *Od.* 22.42), which will seize them once Odysseus announces his identity. From Plato's perspective, Odysseus' revenge is highly memorable and at the emotional core of the poem—indeed, it is terrifying.

Certainly, then, Odysseus' vengeance upon the suitors deserves an in-depth analysis, and this chapter sets out to do so on the terms established in the preceding chapters. One conclusion of this analysis will be that Odysseus' revenge is less securely justified and more ambiguous than often believed. This conclusion will lead us to consider again how Odysseus' vengeance might have been terrifying.

4.1 *Stage 1: Odysseus the Absent Lord*

To begin with, Odysseus' absence from Ithaca is the background situation that sets in motion the plot of the poem and its largest *tisis* narrative. Odysseus has left behind his wife and his entire household, as well as the men (presumably then only children) who would become Penelope's suitors. Several characters make reference to his absence in the context of *tisis*. For example, after the disguised Athena has let Telemachos know her outrage at the behavior of the suitors (1.227–29), she recognizes that Odysseus' absence has created the opportunity for the suitors to commit their crimes: "Truly you have great need for absent Odysseus" (*πολλὸν ἀποικομένον Ὀδυσῆος δεύη*, 253–54). The fact that he is "absent" (*ἀποικομένον*) has set in motion the narrative of *tisis*, and the poet regularly reminds his auditors of this fact. The poet has thematized absence by repeatedly having characters apply the verb *ἀποίχομαι* to Odysseus, especially in view of the dire situation on Ithaca.¹ For instance, when Penelope proposes the bow contest, she makes a direct connection between Odysseus' absence and the suitors' devastation of her home (21.68–70). Once Odysseus arrives upon Ithaca, these descriptions become ever more ominous as he, in disguise, comes increasingly nearer to the most private and intimate spaces of his home, eventually reaching his bedchamber. Odysseus' long absence from his home is analogous to both Orestes' and Agamemnon's. The former was away until he could return in the eighth year of Aigisthos' reign and obtain vengeance (3.306); the latter was away for the ten years of the war, and it is his absence that provides the opportunity for Aigisthos to corrupt Klytaimnestra and seize the kingdom. Both Agamemnon

1. 1.135, 253, 3.77, 4.109, 19.19, 21.70. The phrase *ἀποικομένοιο ἄνακτος*, "absent lord," is a formula occupying the second hemistich of the line (14.7, 450, 17.296, 21.395). Odysseus is the only character in the poem who is ever the subject of this verb.

and Odysseus, like all the Achaians who went to Troy, endured “trials” (ἄεθλοι, 4.170, 240). By contrast, while the Achaians were “fulfilling many trials” (πολέας τελέοντες ἀέθλους, 3.262), Aigisthos took his ease in Argos (263), just as the suitors are doing in Ithaca.

4.2 Stage 2: The Suitors Receive and Disregard Warnings

Like Aigisthos, the suitors receive a specific warning—numerous warnings, in fact—of the consequences of their crimes and so their acts may be considered ἀτασθαλίας. Atypically, the suitors receive these *after* they have already entered Odysseus' home, feasted on his stores, and begun wooing Penelope. One reason for this chronology is that it enables the poem to depict as much of Odysseus' *tisis* narrative as possible in the 41 days of story time.² Another reason for this chronology is that the warnings advise the suitors to desist from *continuing* in their offenses rather than to refrain from *beginning* them. This pattern of advising to cease an offense in progress is unique among *tisis* narratives in the *Odyssey*. Nonetheless, the temporal collapse of future, past, and present is consistent with negative reciprocity more generally.

To consider in more detail one example of a warning that the suitors receive, their first warning comes in the form of an omen. In Book 2, Telemachos has called an assembly of Ithacans to voice his grievances against the suitors and get support from the community to end their depredations. He finds little help among the people, but prays for divine aid (2.143–45):

ἐγὼ δὲ θεοὺς ἐπιβώσομαι αἰὲν ἔόντας,
αἷ κέ ποθι Ζεὺς δῶσι παλίντιτα ἔργα γενέσθαι·
νήποινοί κεν ἔπειτα δόμων ἔντοσθεν ὀλοισθε.145

*But I will call up the gods who are eternal for help,
in the hope that somehow Zeus may provide that there be acts
of vengeance in return.
Then would you perish without requital in the halls.*145

Telemachos prays not simply that the suitors leave. (They can do so of their own will, should their spirit direct them on this more profitable course [138–43].)

2. Compare the way an episode like Helen's *teichoscopia* in the *Iliad* is a more natural fit for a much earlier point in the war, but has been placed at the point it is so that the poet can fit it in his narrow timeframe. See Kirk in Kirk et al. ad 3.161–246.

Rather, he asks for vengeance (παλίντιτα ἔργα). And vengeance, Telemachos believes, means the suitors' deaths.

Zeus confirms Telemachos' prayer and prediction of destruction by sending two eagles as a sign (146–56):

ὥς φάτο Τηλέμαχος, τῷ δ' αἰετῷ εὐρύοπα Ζεὺς
 ὑψόθεν ἐκ κορυφῆς ὄρεος προέηκε πέτεσθαι.
 τῷ δ' ἔως μὲν ῥ' ἐπέτοντο μετὰ πνοιῇσ' ἀνέμοιο,
 πλησίω ἀλλήλοισι τιτανομένω πτερύγεσσιν·
 ἀλλ' ὅτε δὴ μέσσην ἀγορὴν πολύφημον ἰκέσθην, 150
 ἔνθ' ἐπιδινηθέντε τιναξάσθην πτερὰ πυκνά,
 ἐς δ' ἰδέτην πάντων κεφαλὰς, ὄσσοντο δ' ὄλεθρον·
 δρυψαμένω δ' ὀνύχεσσι παρειὰς ἀμφί τε δειρὰς
 δεξιῷ ἦϊξαν διὰ τ' οἰκία καὶ πόλιν αὐτῶν.
 θάμβησαν δ' ὄρνιθας, ἐπεὶ ἴδον ὀφθαλμοῖσιν· 155
 ὥρμηναν δ' ἀνὰ θυμὸν ἅ περ τελέεσθαι ἔμελλον.

*Thus spoke Telemachos. Therefore, wide-seeing Zeus sent forth two eagles
 flying from on high, from a mountain peak.*

*For a while they were flying with a gust of wind,
 stretching their wings near one another.*

*But when indeed they reached the middle of the voluble meeting place, 150
 there, whirling about, they beat their wings rapidly
 and gazed upon the heads of all and looked on with destruction their eyes.*

*Having torn with their talons all round their cheeks and necks,
 they darted to the right through their houses and city.*

*They were amazed at the birds, when they saw them with their eyes. 155
 And they pondered in their spirit what was going to be fulfilled.*

Two birds of prey, flying in unison, giving deadly glances, would seem to signify Odysseus and Telemachos.³ Though amazed, the Ithacans remain uncertain about the sign's meaning. Halitherses, an old man particularly skilled at reading bird-signs, provides an interpretation: Odysseus' return is imminent and it will be devastating (2.160–76):

3. There is a slight difficulty in line 153, which could be read to indicate that the birds are attacking each other. More likely, the gesture is of grief: they tear at their own cheeks and necks. See S. West in Heubeck et al. ad 152–54.

ὃ σφιν ἐὺ φρονέων ἀγορήσατο καὶ μετέειπε·
 160 “κέκλυτε δὴ νῦν μευ, Ἰθακήσιοι, ὅττι κεν εἴπω·
 μνηστῆρσιν δὲ μάλιστα πιφασκόμενος τάδε εἶρω.
 τοῖσιν γὰρ μέγα πῆμα κυλίνδεται· οὐ γὰρ Ὀδυσσεὺς
 δὴν ἀπάνευθε φίλων ὦν ἔσσεται, ἀλλὰ που ἤδη
 ἐγγὺς ἐὼν τοῖσδεσσι φόνον καὶ κῆρα φυτεύει,
 165 πάντεσσιν· πολέσιν δὲ καὶ ἄλλοισιν κακὸν ἔσται,
 οἷ νεμόμεσθ’ Ἰθάκην εὐδείελον. ἀλλὰ πολὺ πρὶν
 φραζώμεσθ’ ὥς κεν καταπαύσομεν· οἱ δὲ καὶ αὐτοὶ
 παύεσθων· καὶ γάρ σφιν ἄφαρ τόδε λωΐόν ἐστιν.
 οὐ γὰρ ἀπείρητος μαντεύομαι, ἀλλ’ ἐὺ εἰδώς·
 170 καὶ γὰρ κείνῳ φημὶ τελευτηθῆναι ἅπαντα,
 ὥς οἱ ἐμυθεόμην, ὅτε Ἴλιον εἰσανέβαινον
 Ἀργεῖοι, μετὰ δέ σφιν ἔβη πολύμητις Ὀδυσσεύς.
 φῆν κακὰ πολλὰ παθόντ’, ὀλέσαντ’ ἅπο πάντας ἑταίρους,
 ἄγνωστον πάντεσσιν ἔεικοστῷ ἐνιαυτῷ
 175 οἴκαδ’ ἐλεύσεσθαι· τὰ δὲ δὴ νῦν πάντα τελεῖται.”

Intending good, he addressed the assembly and spoke among them:
 160 “Listen to me now, Ithacans, to whatever I say.
For the suitors especially I proclaim and tell these things.
For against them a great woe is rolling. For Odysseus will not long
be away from his dear ones, but, I suppose, being already
near, is sowing killing and death for these men,
 165 *all of them. And he will be an evil thing also for many others*
of us who dwell on clear-seen Ithaca. But much sooner
let us consider how we may stop this—or let them
stop this themselves, for this is absolutely better for them.
For I prophesy not as one inexperienced, but understanding well.
 170 *For I declare that all things have come to pass for that man,*
just as I was telling him when the Argives embarked for Ilion,
and with them went Odysseus of many wiles. I said that,
having suffered many evils and having lost all his companions,
unknown to all, in the twentieth year,
 175 *he would come home. And now indeed all these things are coming to pass.”*

Halitherses does not describe the portent, and he even seems to ignore its details, since he makes no mention of Telemachos as the analog to the second eagle. He is focused on Odysseus alone. The preeminent feeling in his proclamation is imminence. Vengeance is already in motion, even now upon them. “A great woe *is*

rolling” (*κυλίνδεται*), in the present tense, like a wave already stirred up and on its way.⁴ Their demise has “already” begun, since Odysseus will “not long” be away, Halitherses foresees. The seer immediately intensifies this thought: Odysseus is perhaps already nearby. There is a problem here, since Odysseus is actually on Ogygia at this point.⁵ A similar critique could be made of Halitherses’ claim that the prophecy he recalls giving Odysseus before he departed for Troy is “now” (*νῦν*) being fulfilled, even though Halitherses knows nothing of Odysseus’ present condition. But for Halitherses, the diachronic temporal framework of Odysseus’ return and revenge is collapsing: he sees future vengeance as already here; Odysseus is planting the seeds of destruction. The bird omen has revealed to Halitherses that the suitors are implicated in a course of events ending in their destruction already having begun some 20 years earlier. Just as Hermes, “intending well” (*ἀγαθὰ φρονέων*, 1.43), advised Aigisthos to refrain from murder and adultery, so does Halitherses, “intending well” (*ἐν φρονέων*), advise what is “better” for the suitors: cease ruining Odysseus’ home. But like Aigisthos, the suitors are not persuaded. In answer to Halitherses, Eurymachos declares, “We do not heed your prophecy” (*οὔτε θεοπροπίης ἐμπαζόμεθ’*, 2.201). Thus, like other criminals ignoring warnings, he chooses and ensures his own doom.

There is one further detail about this scene that I alluded to in the book’s introduction. The eagles look down upon the heads “of all” (152) who are assembled. The “destruction” (*ὄλεθρον*, 152) in their gaze—an answer to Telemachos’ hope that the suitors “would perish” (*ὄλοισθε*, 145)—is indiscriminate. A note of foreboding for the community as a whole might be attached to the way the birds fly off “through their [the Ithacans’] homes and city” (154): Odysseus’ slaughter will not be limited to those he kills within his own home, as Telemachos had prayed, but affect households throughout the city. Confirming this sense of a wider disaster to come from Odysseus’ return, Halitherses predicts Odysseus will be “an evil thing” (166), not only for the suitors but also for “many others” who live on Ithaca. As we shall see, when Odysseus slays the suitors, the consequences are felt by the whole community, most especially their relatives.

The poet depicts in detail three occasions when soothsayers warn the suitors. In addition to Halitherses’ prophecy in the Ithacan assembly, Theoklymenos has a vision of the suitors engaged in a bloody feast and appearing as ghosts on their way to Hades (20.345–47). His proclamation serves as another warning to the suitors by bringing a scene of future judgment into the present. Crime

4. The imagery is of a storm-tossed sea: cf. Poseidon’s *tisis* against Odysseus, when “a great wave rolls” against him (*μέγα κύμα κυλίνδων*, 5.296).

5. Page (1955) 170–71, S. West in Heubeck et al. ad 2.161ff.; see Erbse (1972) 119 for further bibl.

and punishment become synchronous before his eyes and in their hearing. (See chapter 1 for an analysis of that passage.) In the bow contest in Book 21, the seer Leodes tries and fails to string the bow. He then makes a prediction. The train of his thought is somewhat difficult to follow, but he seems to predict that, since the suitors insist on pressing their case and trying to win Penelope, Odysseus' bow will kill "many . . . leading men" (πολλούς . . . ἀριστῆας, 21.153). Because of this impending doom, he advises they stop the contest (144–66).⁶ The prophecies of Halitherses, Theoklymenos, and Leodes constitute a "triadic structure."⁷ This parallels in its three-fold, cumulative significance the three warnings Odysseus gives his companions in the Thrinakia episode. In addition, the suitors witness two other omens (20.240–47, 21.412–15) and receive warnings via lying tales by Odysseus in disguise. In these lying tales, Odysseus tries to warn the suitors personally of impending doom, first Antinoös (17.414–61), then Amphinomos (18.119–57), and finally Eurymachos (18.365–86). This abundance of warnings—eight given to the suitors either collectively or individually, plus one to the bad herdsmen in the form of a prayer by Eumaios—magnifies the suitors' and their allies' culpability. The suitors heed none of these warnings—with the single exception of Amphinomos' warning not to murder Telemachos (20.244–47)—and so they become guilty of ἀτασθαλίας.

Speakers in the poem attribute ἀτασθαλίας to the suitors far more than to any other character or set of characters, five out of a total of nine times. As in the other cases examined so far, to cite ἀτασθαλίας is to take an evaluative stance. Odysseus cites the suitors' ἀτασθαλίας in the aftermath of the slaughter, when he demands that Eurykleia not boast over the dead (22.416). (I examine that scene more fully in chapter 5.) Penelope cites the suitors' ἀτασθαλίας in a similar scene after the slaughter, insisting to Eurykleia that it could not have been Odysseus who killed them (23.67). In both cases, the goal of the speaker is to eliminate, or at least minimize, the part Odysseus played in their demise. In the final assembly scene in Book 24, Halitherses cites the suitors' ἀτασθαλίας in order to dissuade their kin from seeking revenge against Odysseus (24.458). I examine this scene more in chapter 6, but at this point I simply note that Halitherses' speech

6. Stanford ad 21.153 has a slightly different view: Leodes intends his words to be only hyperbole, but only the poem's auditors detect the irony that he is predicting their actual deaths; de Jong ad 21.152–62 takes the same view. The parallels adduced from Book 21 (91, 248–55) do not mention death. It seems better to me to take Leodes' sentiment as an ironic—perhaps knowingly ironic on his part—statement of the so-called heroic code: it is better to die in the attempt than to live on having failed to woo her.

7. Jones (1941) shows how three triadic sets of allusions to Odysseus' "revenge motif" in the first two books prepare auditors for the long wait until the plot of his vengeance begins in earnest in Book 13. On triadic structures, see de Jong xix, with bibliography.

responds to his earlier one in Book 2. He again implicates the wider Ithacan community in the conventional language of failure to listen to advice: “You were not heeding me” (οὐ γὰρ ἐμοὶ πείθεσθ’, 456). They failed to restrain their kin from abusing Odysseus’ home and, as a result, they justly suffered the loss of their kin.

The other two instances in which ἀτασθαλῖαι appear involve the suitors’ seer Leodes. Before Leodes warns of the dangers of the bow to the suitors, the poet introduces him by describing how he seems to stand apart from the others (21.144–47):

Λειώδης δὲ πρῶτος ἀνίστατο, Ἥνοπος υἱός,
ὁ σφι θυοσκόος ἔσκε, παρὰ κρητῆρα δὲ καλὸν
ἴζε μυχοίτατος αἰεὶ· ἀτασθαλῖαι δέ οἱ οἴῳ
ἔχθραι ἔσαν, πᾶσιν δὲ νεμέσσα μνηστήρεσσιν·

145

*Leodes stood up first, the son of Enops,
who was a diviner for them, and beside the good mixing bowl,
farthest within, he was always sitting. Their reckless deeds to him alone
were hateful, and he was indignant toward all the suitors.*

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Despite his ill feelings toward the actions of the suitors, he nonetheless picks up the bow and tries his hand at stringing it. His attempt at the bow is important for his fate, more so than his feelings about the other suitors. For his actions make him one of the number. It is sometimes said that he is essentially blameless.⁸ But the text never indicates that he rejected feasting, and it does make clear he tried to win Penelope. He may be less villainous than the others, but the poet has decided upon a plot of revenge that has Odysseus making no such distinctions.

The remaining citation of the suitors’ ἀτασθαλῖαι comes when Leodes begs Odysseus for his life (22.312–19):

γουνούμαί σ’, Ὀδυσεῦ· σὺν δέ μ’ αἶδεο καί μ’ ἐλέησον·
οὐ γάρ πώ τινά φημι γυναικῶν ἐν μεγάροισιν
εἰπεῖν οὐδέ τι ῥέξαι ἀτάσθαλον· ἀλλὰ καὶ ἄλλους
πάνεσκον μνηστήρας, ὅτις τοιαῦτά γε ῥέζοι.
ἀλλά μοι οὐ πείθοντο κακῶν ἅπο χεῖρας ἔχεσθαι·
τῷ καὶ ἀτασθαλίῃσιν ἀεικέα πότμον ἐπέσπον.
αὐτὰρ ἐγὼ μετὰ τοῖσι θυοσκόος οὐδὲν ἔοργῶς
κείσομαι, ὥς οὐκ ἔστι χάρις μετόπισθ’ ἐνεργέων.

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8. Fenik (1974) 194.

*I am supplicating you by your knees, Odysseus. Respect me and pity me.
 For I deny that in any way I said or did anything wanton
 to any of the women in the halls. But I even was trying to check
 the other suitors, whoever of them was doing these sorts of things. 315
 But they were not heeding me and holding their hands back from evil deeds.
 Therefore, by their own recklessness they have met a shameful lot.
 But I, a diviner among them, having done nothing,
 will lie dead, since there is no gratitude afterwards for good deeds.*

Leodes claims he “did nothing” (318), but he specifically refers only to offenses against the women of the household (313–14). He tried but failed to dissuade the other suitors—here, the suitors are depicted with the typical diction of failing to listen (οὐ πείθοντο, 316). In the face of that good advice, the suitors’ deeds become characterized by ἀτασθαλίας and so they justly perish. Odysseus fills in the gaps to Leodes’ story: Leodes may not have abused the women in the household, but he aimed at marrying Penelope (324). Leodes may have warned the suitors of where their actions were leading—and so been attuned to and despised the evils of their ways—but he failed to heed his own advice and participated in the crimes that led to his destruction. He can properly identify ἀτασθαλίας in others, but is blind to it in himself. Here we should note that self-blindness is typical of those exhibiting ἀτασθαλίας.⁹

4.3 Stages Three and Four: The Suitors Invade Odysseus’ Home, Dine, and Woo Penelope

The unique feature at this point in Odysseus’ *tisis* narrative is that the suitors would seem to be only at the stage of *preparing* to commit crimes on the scale of Aigisthos (murder and adultery) when Odysseus kills them in revenge. Their offenses at that point are plotting, wooing, and dining. These actions do have parallels with the paradigm of Aigisthos’ actions—only, the parallel is with the preliminary stage before Aigisthos actually committed his crimes. The suitors plot against Telemachos (2.367–68, 4.658–74, 16.342–406, 20.241–42): “their best men lie in an ambush” (ἄριστῆες λοχόωσιν, 15.28) for him, just as Aigisthos

9. Typically, characters do not speak of their own ἀτασθαλίας. Atypically, Hektor indicts himself for ignoring Polydamas’ advice and pressing the attack (*Il.* 22.104). Hektor’s self-rebuke stands out for a number of reasons, on which see Cairns (2012) 44–49. Hektor holds a unique ethical posture in the Homeric epics. (There is another partial exception to this pattern when, as we saw, Odysseus, acting as narrator of his own *apologoi*, has Eurylochos condemn him for his ἀτασθαλίας [10.437].)

“set his best men in an ambush” (φῶτας ἀρίστους εἶσε λόχον, 4.530–31) against Agamemnon. They woo Penelope, just as Aigisthos woos Klytaimnestra before eventually winning her over (3.265–72). By custom, the suitors’ feasting at Penelope’s home is an element of their wooing and their role as guests.¹⁰ But these typically preliminary actions take on great moral significance in Odysseus’ *tisis* narrative. Indeed, by insinuating subtle ambiguities about the nature of the suitors’ feasting, the poet has given their actions far more sinister overtones than has been previously recognized. From the very first scenes on Ithaca, the poet depicts the suitors’ behavior—especially their feasting—as a depredation against Odysseus’ household and person.

As the scene on Ithaca opens, Telemachos welcomes a guest—Athena disguised as Mentes—and apologizes for the disorder in his home that the suitors have caused (1.158–59). This line of thought elicits from Telemachos the first characterization in the poem of the suitors’ offenses as a crime precipitating an act of requital, and, by virtue of its initial position, this characterization carries special significance. Telemachos says that they “eat another’s livelihood without recompense” (ἀλλότριον βίοντι νήποιον ἔδουσιν, 160). The adjective *νήποιον* derives ultimately from the same root as *tisis*, and means “un-avenged.” It modifies only three things in the *Odyssey*: *βίοντι* (1.160, 377, 2.142, 14.377, 18.280), dying men (1.380, 2.145), and *κάματον* (“labor,” 14.417). In each of these cases there is a sense that someone or something is lost or consumed—the governing verb in the clause for each is either *ἄλλυμι* or *ἔδω*—and that no repayment for that loss has been made. In the case of Telemachos’ apology, the suitors have eaten up Odysseus’ stores without repayment (cf. 1.250–51). The sense of repayment or recompense is intentionally ambiguous here. It at once connotes the suitors’ consumption of Odysseus’ stores without making any kind of payment (in the form of a counter-gift) and at the same time suggests that Odysseus’ stores have been, as it were, “murdered,” since the most common beneficiaries of “vengeance” (*tisis*) are murdered people.

βίοντι has a similar ambiguity that supports the idea of the suitors’ figurative “murder” of Odysseus’ stores. Besides “livelihood,” *βίοντι* often means simply “life” (cf. 1.287, 5.394, 12.328, et al.). The semantic range of this word results from the conditions of the poem’s competitive, heroic society, centered on the unit of the autonomous *oikos*. Foodstuffs and the other basic constituents of one’s household symbolize one’s *τιμή*, and secure one’s life.¹¹ The fact that *νήποιον*

10. See S. West in Heubeck et al., 155–60; see esp. 59 n. 17 on the marital customs depicted in the poem.

11. Adkins (1960b), esp. 28–32. Adkins believes the elements of the *oikos* literally *are* the Homeric hero’s *τιμή*. Adkins’ views have been challenged: cf. Wilson (2002) 18–20 with

βίοτον also appears as the object of the verb ὀλλυμι, which regularly signifies the death of men—see the two instances of men “dying” (ὀλοισθε) “unrequited” (νήποινοι): 1.380, 2.145—strengthens the sense that consuming a man’s βίος is tantamount to murder.¹²

This connection between βίος/βίος and (κατ)ἔδω/ἔσθίω—the idea of “eating one’s livelihood”—is significant. While the poet uses this motif eleven times to describe the feasting of the suitors,¹³ it appears nowhere else in the extant corpus of Greek literature, with only two exceptions: once in a passage in Quintus of Smyrna (3.456), probably modeled on the *Odyssey*;¹⁴ another time, interestingly, in the parable of the prodigal son in Luke’s gospel (15:30). The particularity of this expression suggests that it possesses especially evocative power. The poet’s auditors would not miss its murderous connotations.

For Telemachos, the grief he feels at the disappearance and apparent death of Odysseus is closely connected to and of a similar kind as the grief he feels at the suitors’ wooing of Penelope and their devastation of his household. Prompted by Athena’s inquiry into why such a raucous feast is being tolerated, he bemoans the loss of his father and his household in the same breath (1.242–51):

οἷχεται ἄϊστος ἄπυστος, ἐμοὶ δ’ ὀδύνas τε γόους τε
 κάλλιπεν· οὐδέ τι κείνον ὀδυρόμενος στεναχίζει
 οἶον, ἐπεὶ νύ μοι ἄλλα θεοὶ κακὰ κήδε’ ἔτευξαν.
 ὅσσοι γὰρ νήσοισιν ἐπικρατέουσιν ἄριστοι, 245
 Δουλιχίῳ τε Σάμῃ τε καὶ ὑλήεντι Ζακύνθῳ,
 ἦδ’ ὅσσοι κραναὴν Ἰθάκην κάτα κοιρανέουσι,
 τόσσοι μητέρ’ ἐμὴν μνῶνται, τρύχουσι δὲ οἶκον.
 ἦ δ’ οὔτ’ ἀρνείται στυγερόν γάμον οὔτε τελευτήν
 ποιῆσαι δύναται· τοὶ δὲ φθινύθουσιν ἔδοντες 250
 οἶκον ἐμόν· τάχα δὴ με διαρραΐσουσι καὶ αὐτόν.

He is gone, unseen and unheard from, and has left to me pains and lamentations.

Not by any means for that man alone do I moan, grieving,

further bibliography. But the key point remains: in Homeric ideology, the material goods of a household are equated with one’s τιμή.

12. The connection between ὀλλυμι as used to describe the loss of foodstuffs and as used to describe men’s deaths is especially pronounced at 1.377 and 380: see p. 145 later.

13. 1.160, 2.123, 11.116, 13.396, 419, 428, 14.377, 15.32, 17.378, 18.280, 19.159.

14. Quintus’ use of the verb φθίσει, “will waste,” in this context makes it reminiscent of *Od.* 1.250–51.

since now the gods have fashioned other evil woes for me.
For as many leading men as rule over the islands 245
Doulichion, Same, and woody Zakynthos,
and as many as hold sway over rocky Ithaca,
so many men woo my mother and wear out my household.
And she neither refuses a hateful marriage nor is able
to make an end of it. These men, by their eating, waste 250
my household. Soon they will destroy me too.

The same death-laden cry of lament—ὄδυρόμενος στεναχίζω—signifies grief both for the loss of Odysseus and for the loss of his *oikos*. The syntactic ambiguity of what verb governs οἶκον ἐμὸν in line 251—it could be φθινύθουσιν or ἔδοντες or both—further strengthens the sense that murder through a kind of cannibalism is implicit in the crimes of the suitors.¹⁵ They literally “eat” the household and life of Odysseus, whose *oikos* they thus “cause to perish” (φθινύθουσιν), a fate more commonly associated with men in the poem.¹⁶ Later, in his speech before the assembled Ithacans, Mentor makes the suitors’ consumption of Odysseus’ household explicit: “They violently eat up the household of Odysseus” (κατέδουσι βιαίως οἶκον Ὀδυσσῆος, 2.237–38; cf. 4.318). Eurymachos similarly promises that Telemachos’ “wealth . . . will be evilly devoured” (χρήματα . . . κακῶς βεβρώσεται, 2.203). The verb βιβρώσκω is rare in the Homeric corpus and carries gruesome connotations: for example, Zeus uses it to denote Hera’s imagined “raw” (ὠμόν) feast upon the Trojans (*Il.* 4.34–36).¹⁷ Furthermore, the ghastly portent in Book 20, in which the suitors are seen feasting on “blood-defiled meat” (αἵμοφόρυκτα . . . κρέα, 20.348), deepens the feeling that they are engaged in a form of cannibalism. In Book 20, this vision would seem to represent the suitors as eaters of raw, bloody meat, as carnivorous animals.¹⁸ But the marked imagery and rare vocabulary of this vision resonate with the ghastly imagery surrounding Antinoös’ eventual death in Book 22. His slaughter (along with the rest

15. On the undercurrents of cannibalism in the poem, see Buchan (2001) and (2004) 136–55, Cook (1999) 166–67; de Jong ad 1.245–51 notes the recurring motif of the suitors’ “wasting” and “consuming” Odysseus’ property, though not the latent sense of cannibalism; Hopman (2012) 23–24 and Bakker (2013) 45 briefly note the cannibalistic overtones of some of these passages. Besides Bakker, Saïd (1979) is the best analysis of the suitors’ feast.

16. φθινύθω commonly describes the death of men: e.g., *Il.* 6.327, 21.466. The verb’s root, φθι-, denotes “decay” and “withering,” and is frequently associated with human mortality: see Vernant (1991) 40, Nagy (1979) 175–89.

17. βιβρώσκω is found in only four places in Homer: *Od.* 2.203, 22.403, *Il.* 4.35, 22.94. See Saïd (1979) 10. See also pp. 182–83 later.

18. Bakker (2013) 94.

of the suitors' deaths) fulfills this earlier strange, portentous vision; in retrospect, it brings to the fore the cannibalistic nature of the suitors' crimes.¹⁹

Commensurate with their cannibalistic feasting, the suitors will die in Book 22 in a similarly grisly way. But already in Mentor's speech before the assembled Ithacans in Book 2, there is a hint that the suitors' feasting will result in a self-consuming punishment (2.237–38):

σφὰς γὰρ παρθέμενοι κεφαλὰς κατέδουσι βιαίως
οἶκον Ὀδυσσῆος, τὸν δ' οὐκέτι φασὶ νέεσθαι.

*For, hazarding their own heads, they are devouring violently
the household of Odysseus, whom they think will no more return.*

Within the context of feasting, the verb *παρατίθημι* is regularly used to signify the presentation of food (1.192, et al.; in the middle voice: 15.506). The connotations here are thus of the suitors' offering themselves as a meal. But there is an even darker syntactic ambiguity. The apparent object of the verb *κατέδουσι* is enjambed (*οἶκον*), and this delay in fulfilling the grammatical expectation suggests, at least momentarily, another possible way of construing the line—taking *κεφαλὰς* from immediately before the verb as both its object and the object of participle *παρθέμενοι*. Before being resolved in the next line, this ambiguity hints in passing at an autophagous aspect to the suitors' feast, of their “consuming their own heads.” As was the case mentioned earlier in which Telemachos complained that the suitors “by their eating, waste my household” (1.250–51), a grammatical ambiguity iconically represents an ironic moral ambiguity.²⁰

Telemachos fears that soon it will be his fate too to die by violent dismemberment: “Soon they will destroy (*διαρραίσουσι*) me too.” The implications of the verb *διαρραίω* are of “rending” and “dashing to pieces,” as might happen to a ship destroyed in a storm (12.290); or, significantly, as Polyphemos hopes he might “dash” the brains of Odysseus against the floor of his cave (9.459).²¹ Telemachos'

19. See pp. 148–49 later.

20. See Loney (2011) for a similar reading of Alcman 1. There is perhaps another hint of autophagy at 22.18–19 when Antinoös' own blood spills forth, perhaps (though it is not explicitly stated) upon the food that was a moment earlier his feast.

21. The latter example is of *ραίω* without the intensifying prefix *δια-*. Beyond the present example, the verb appears in the *Odyssey* only to denote ships or rafts destroyed on rocks or splintered by winds: 5.221, 6.326, 8.569, 13.151, 173. Considering the intratextual link between the suitors and Polyphemos, it is worth noting that the connection of eating the “lives” of men and facing *tisis* as a result is most apparent in Odysseus' encounter with Polyphemos (though there is no mention of *βίωτος* in this context).

fears are justified. Soon, Antinoös in the assembly scene of Book 2 speaks of Odysseus' household as Telemachos' and threatens Telemachos' βίωτος: as long as Penelope remains unwed, he says, the suitors will "eat your life/livelihood and possessions" (βίωτόν τε τὸν καὶ κτήματ' ἔδονται, 2.123; cf. 13.419, 19.159). The suitors, it becomes clear, are slowly eating him alive.²²

4.4 *The Crimes and Guilt of the Suitors*

On the interpretation I am advancing, the major offense of the suitors lies in their cannibalistic devastation of Odysseus' household, with their wooing of Penelope, their plotting against Telemachos' life, and their disrespect to servants and guests playing smaller, supporting roles. Feasting, thus construed, becomes a capital crime. There has been significant critical discussion about the nature of their crimes and the reasons why they might be condemned in the context of the ethical world of the poem. Many of the various theories proposed are at least partially true. To an important degree, the suitors' guilt is overdetermined. Each of the different reasons proposed contributes to the suitors' guilt. These various offenses culminate in the single most important reason justifying their deaths—their criminal feasting.

Some have proposed that the suitors are liable for (attempted) murder;²³ *hybris*;²⁴ their breach of the standard of "appropriateness."²⁵ Some view Odysseus' self-defense as sufficient grounds for their slaying;²⁶ others, the suitors' devastation

22. It is worth noting here that the ambiguities in these passages concerning βίωτος and οἶκος, though mostly unnoticed by modern scholars, did catch the attention of Plutarch. Citing some of the passages from the *Odyssey* I referenced earlier, Plutarch notes that βίωτος and οἶκος are examples "of words meaning several things" (τῶν πολλαχῶς λεγομένων, *Quomodo adul.*, 22.D–E). Although Plutarch seems to think that only one meaning is operative at a time in these passages, he did consider the words' multivalence (and potential ambiguity) worth notice.

23. See Allen (1939), esp. 112–13. From the suitors' point of view, they might conceive of their plot to kill Telemachos as an act of self-defense, seeing as Telemachos has openly threatened them with death (1.379–80, 2.316, 325). This seems to be the reason they imagine his death at 2.325–36.

24. See Jones (1941), Fisher (1992) 162–76, Edwards (1993) 51–52. ὕβρις and related terms appear in passages condemning the suitors: e.g., 1.227. *Hybris* is "the serious assault on the honor of another, which is likely to cause shame, and lead to anger and attempts at revenge" (Fisher [1992] 1). It condemns the suitors for their attacks on Odysseus and his household. The form of that attack is their reckless, excessive feasting.

25. See Long (1970) 135–39.

26. See Yamagata (1994) 30–31.

of Odysseus' *oikos*.²⁷ As should be clear, I find the last reason the most important, though the crime is far richer in symbolic significance than is usually appreciated. John Halverson has pointed out that all the various aspects of the suitors' actions that the poet depicts as criminal behavior come down to an assault on Odysseus' household.²⁸ I would extend his conclusion: the attack on Odysseus' household takes on the language and imagery of murder, so that to wreck his *oikos* and *βίος* is, symbolically, to kill him.

Perhaps the most popular view of the suitors' crimes is that they consist of offenses against the code of *xenia*.²⁹ *xenia* is an important custom underlying the meaning of the suitors' conduct. If we suppose they violate this custom, it is important to establish in what respect they do so. Their violation of *xenia* consists more in disrespecting their host than in disrespecting guests. The suitors, of course, are hardly guiltless in their treatment of guests. Nonetheless, the blame for mistreatment of guests inside the household falls more on Telemachos as host: it is his responsibility to ensure even a beggar (as they suppose Odysseus to be) is well treated, as Penelope makes clear (18.221–25; cf. 17.566–68). In addition, although the suitors may long to supplant Odysseus and become master of his *oikos*, they are not in fact hosts, since they are in another's home. The disrespect they show Odysseus when he is disguised as a beggar adds to their wickedness precisely because Odysseus is in fact *not* another guest but secretly their host. Their crime lies in disrespecting their host and his *oikos*—which in important respects is the same thing. When Odysseus returns to his *oikos* in disguise and faces the abuse of the suitors, he suffers in his person a reflection of the crimes that the suitors have already been committing against his *oikos*. They do this through their excessive feasting, which includes their hoarding and refusing to share their food with the disguised Odysseus, whose food, ironically, it actually is, as Antinoös admits (17.452). The feast “is the primary locus for participation in *xenia*”; hence, its observance has greater moral importance than any other element of *xenia*.³⁰

27. See Adkins (1960a) 54–55: the suitors have made “a declaration of war on the house of Odysseus”; see also Halverson (1985); the view of Bakker (2013) 43–48, 133 is the nearest to my own. Bakker has shown how the suitors feast as if Odysseus' store of meat—which they consume without making sacrifices—was endless. See also Grethlein (2017) 214, 216. Most recently, Canevaro (2018) 17 uses New Materialism ideas to describe the suitors' crimes as “conspicuous overconsumption.”

28. Halverson (1985), esp. 142.

29. This is the view of, among others, Saïd (1979), Reece (1993) 165–87; this is partially the view of Yamagata (1994) 29–30, though he ultimately thinks self-defense is the true grounds for their slaying.

30. Reece (1993) 22.

The suitors' ill-mannered treatment of a beggar—a culpable offense but hardly a capital crime—becomes a grave fault when the beggar happens to be the lord of the house and their host. The way in which the suitors mistreat a seemingly lowly guest who in reality has a higher status and is owed respect has been seen as following the pattern of a theoxeny.³¹ In a theoxeny, a god in disguise visits mortals, and the way in which the mortals treat the god brings either rewards or punishments, depending on whether they either respect or disrespect the god. Odysseus, thus, acts like a god in a theoxeny: he gives the suitors the opportunity to demonstrate their wickedness in mistreating him, and after they do so, he reveals his identity and punishes them. Odysseus, on this model, becomes an instrument of divine justice.

One of the problems that the suitors present for Odysseus' *oikos* is that, in contrast to the obligations facing a host, the obligations that the conventions of *xenia* impose on a guest during his stay are few—at least in the Homeric model.³² Once a host has accepted a guest into his home, the guest's obligation is simply to accept his host's hospitality. The poet never reveals the manner in which the suitors entered Odysseus' house. The normal procedure would entail someone acting as host and allowing them inside. Perhaps Telemachos acted as host, as he did with the disguised Athena in Book 1. Perhaps they simply showed up after Odysseus was taken for dead and entered uninvited, though Telemachos indicates to Athena that Penelope could dismiss them by refusing remarriage (1.249).³³

31. Kearns (1982), Louden (2011) 30–56, 299–302, 311–13. The *Odyssey*, of course, is not an explicit theoxeny since Odysseus is not a god. (Hence, Louden [2011] 41 calls it a “virtual theoxeny” and Kearns [1982] 5 notes that Odysseus “somehow *stands* for a god.”) One insight to take from the way the *Odyssey* uses the theoxeny narrative pattern is that what matters most in the treatment of guests is the reality (not just appearance) of their status. Baucis and Philemon, in the classic theoxeny story (Ov. *Met.* 8.611–724), are rewarded for how they treat strangers who are actually Jupiter and Mercury, not for how they treat genuine beggars. (For a theoxeny that works on a more generalizing pattern, see Matt. 25: 31–46. In this case, Jesus says that every one of “the least of these brothers of mine” in need is somehow also Jesus himself.) Neither the Baucis and Philemon story nor the *Odyssey* generalizes the treatment of all guests as equivalent to the treatment of a god. In the *Odyssey*'s theoxeny model, beggars are to be respected because they might be gods, not just because they are beggars. When Antinoös strikes the disguised Odysseus with the footstool, an unnamed suitor says he acted unwisely, not because it is bad to strike a genuine beggar, but because he would be doomed “if truly somehow he is one of the heavenly gods” (εἰ δὴ πού τις ἐπουράνιος θεός ἐστι, 17.484).

32. Reece (1993), esp. 5–46, whose analysis outlines the narrative elements and obligations of the actors.

33. Though the suitors' entrance is never described, S. West in Heubeck et al. 157 argues, “it is scarcely possible to imagine that they could have established themselves in the first place without an invitation.” She adduces other archaic examples of suitors pursuing a woman en masse, usually at the invitation of her κύριος. Such an invitation, West points out (58), would be even more essential if a woman (like Penelope) was only a presumed widow because of

Regardless, the suitors act as though they are entitled to be entertained as guests in Odysseus' home. In the custom of *xenia*, all the important obligations a guest has lie in the future, in the promise to reciprocate the hospitality his host has shown him. The one formal obligation upon a guest during his stay is to reveal his identity—but the true effect of this act lies in the future, since it provides a way for the host one day to call upon his guest to show him similar hospitality.³⁴ A guest's revealing his identity is a sign of a future obligation, not a present one. The suitors do not intend to fulfill their obligation. They assume their host is dead and cannot ask for reciprocation. This results in excessive feasting, for they imagine never having to repay what they have consumed; they can be parasites. The suitors, thus, exploit a gap in the rules of *xenia* in order to fatten themselves on the livelihood of another. Or, to put it in terms of the cannibalistic imagery of their crimes, they are committing a kind of necrophagy, glutting themselves on a dead man, making them like the scavenging dogs or birds that, in the common Homeric motif, eat the bodies of the unburied dead. In this way, the suitors have not so much violated *xenia* as exploited and perverted it, reaping its benefits without paying its costs. The key point here for my argument is that the suitors' exploitation of *xenia* results in an attack on Odysseus' *oikos* and *βίωτος* through their excessive feasting. Their feasting is not in and of itself a crime, but the poet has chosen to depict it as such, as analogous to murder, for all their gluttonous excess.

The best presentation of the argument that the suitors' crimes lie in their offense against *xenia* was made in a 1979 article by Suzanne Saïd, and the view of their crimes I have taken fully accords with her argument.³⁵ Saïd argues that

her husband's long absence. Though critics often assume the suitors are uninvited, there is little textual evidence on this point. The best evidence may be Telemachos' claim before the assembled Ithacans that the suitors beset Penelope "against her will" (*οὐκ ἐθέλουσῃ*, 2.50). What Telemachos means is not clear, and it may be a misleading remark designed to inflame the rest of the Ithacans, especially since it contradicts his private words to Athena at 1.249. Antinoös recalls Telemachos' remark when he says they compelled her to finish weaving the shroud, "against her will, under compulsion" (*οὐκ ἐθέλουσ', ὑπ' ἀνάγκης*, 2.110). Antinoös is perhaps implying that the only compulsion put upon Penelope is to finish a task whose completion she had deceitfully postponed.

34. Cf. 9.16–18, where Odysseus indicates that by giving Alkinoös his name he may himself be "host" (*ξείνους*) to Alkinoös one day on Ithaca. The meaning of these lines is ambiguous—in part, because of whether the word *ξείνους* should be taken as "guest" or "host." See Heubeck in Heubeck et al. ad loc., Reece (1993) 25. This effect of name-giving holds true even in the inversion of *xenia* in the Cyclops episode, where Odysseus does reveal his name to Polyphemos, who then is able to reciprocate the violence shown to him in the form of his curse upon Odysseus.

35. See now also Saïd (2011) 65–69, 208, 249–50, 344 for a succinct version in English of her observations.

the suitors break the rules of *xenia* by perverting the core element of this social ritual—the feast. The feast is an integral part of the central Homeric institution, the *oikos*. Saïd sees a deep connection between the suitors' criminal actions, the proper observance of the rules of the feast, and the integrity of Odysseus' *oikos*. Therefore, she writes, "The crimes of the suitors are inseparable from the house of Odysseus . . ." ³⁶ The suitors engage in all manner of harm against the property and persons of Odysseus' *oikos*, so that his household is not only the site of all their crimes: "The house of Odysseus is the unique victim of the suitors . . ." ³⁷ By breaking *la loi du festin* through their excessive, never-to-be-requested consumption, the suitors destroy the constituent, essential parts of Odysseus' *oikos*, especially his cattle. ³⁸ Moreover, Saïd shows how their banquet comes to resemble a distribution of plunder, as they mete out Odysseus' possessions as though they had killed him in battle. ³⁹ In other words, Saïd identifies the suitors' offenses against *xenia* with the destruction of his person and household through their feasting. She summarizes her interpretation of their crimes thus: "All the crimes of the suitors, therefore, come down to one: the destruction of the house of Odysseus." ⁴⁰ On my view, the suitors' offenses against *xenia* are serious; like Saïd, I argue they especially consist in breaking codes of feasting—actions that the poet depicts as equivalent to murdering Odysseus.

At the outset of the slaughter, Odysseus announces a programmatic indictment of the suitors' crimes that explicates his view of the justice of the punitive retribution he is about to exact upon them (22.35–41):

ὦ κύνες, οὐ μ' ἔτ' ἐφάσκεθ' ὑπότροπον οἴκαδε νείσθαι
 δήμου ἅπο Τρώων, ὅτι μοι κατεκείρετε οἶκον
 δμῳῇσιν τε γυναιξὶ παρενάζεσθε βιαίως
 αὐτοῦ τε ζώοντος ὑπεμνάασθε γυναῖκα,
 οὔτε θεοὺς δείσαντες, οἳ οὐρανὸν εὐρὺν ἔχουσιν,
 οὔτε τιν' ἀνθρώπων νέμεσιν κατόπισθεν ἔσεσθαι.
 νῦν ὕμιν καὶ πᾶσιν ὀλέθρου πείρατ' ἐφήπται.

35
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36. Saïd (1979) 9.

37. Saïd (1979) 10.

38. Saïd (1979) 10–11.

39. Saïd (1979) 23–24.

40. Saïd (1979) 10.

*You dogs! You believed that I would no longer turn back and return
 from the land of Troy, seeing that you were wasting my home,
 sleeping with my servant women by force,
 and slyly wooing my wife while I was living.
 You neither feared the gods who hold the wide heaven,
 nor that some indignation of men would exist in the future.
 Now on you, all of you, have the bonds of death been fastened.*

Odysseus levels three charges here: they devastated his home; they slept with his servant women; they wooed his wife.⁴¹ Elsewhere, Odysseus (22.414–15) and Penelope (23.65–66) use an identical pair of lines to condemn the suitors for their disrespect to others—a fourth charge:

*οὐ τινα γὰρ τίεσκον ἐπιχθονίων ἀνθρώπων,
 οὐ κακὸν οὐδὲ μὲν ἐσθλόν, ὅτις σφεας εἰσαφίκοιτο·
 For they respected none of earth-dwelling humans,
 neither low nor noble, whoever came among them.*

As discussed earlier, the suitors' and their allies' abuse of guests in Odysseus' home is particularly grave because it is chiefly leveled at Odysseus himself. Their abuse of strangers is perhaps implied when Penelope speaks these words in Book 23. She does not yet believe that the stranger is Odysseus and may be indicting them for a general pattern of behavior most concretely and recently seen in their treatment of the disguised Odysseus. But when Odysseus says these words, they are only relevant (as far as Odysseus has witnessed himself) to Odysseus and the members of his household.⁴² Thus, while the sentiment has the form of a generic statement implying a wide range of targets of the suitors' abuse (cf. the inclusiveness of the οὐ κακὸς οὐδὲ μὲν ἐσθλός construction at 8.553), its particular focus here is Odysseus himself. When Odysseus says they dishonored "low" and "noble" alike, he is referring most

41. I follow de Jong 526 and M. L. West (2014) 284 in my reading of Odysseus' enumeration of charges in this passage. *Pace* Yamagata (1994) 29–30, who sees in 39–40 "probably" a reference to their disrespect to guests. I read these two lines as similar to the sentiment of 35–36: they foolishly disregarded the retaliatory consequences that men or gods would exact for their crimes.

42. See Ameis-Hentze-Cauer ad loc.

especially to himself as someone who appeared “low” and was also “noble.” (Note how Melanthios refers to Odysseus when disguised as a beggar as *κακός*, “low” [17.217].) A fifth charge against the suitors is that they plotted against Telemachos and desired to seize rule of Ithaca. Eurymachos puts these two acts together when he claims to describe Antinoös’ true intentions (22.52–53).⁴³ It is easy to see why these two acts are connected: the suitors would need to remove a rival for rule. Although the suitors are depicted as plotting against Telemachos and even setting an ambush, Athena has condemned them before they do so (1.294–96). The suitors fail, at any rate, and it is instructive that, when Antinoös learns of the failure of the ambush at sea and urges them to ambush Telemachos on the road, he exhorts them: “let us ourselves take his livelihood and possessions, dividing them up . . .” (*βίοτον δ’ αὐτοὶ καὶ κτήματ’ ἔχωμεν, δασσάμενοι*, 16.384–85). As in the case of their attacks on Odysseus, their offense is depicted as destruction of *βίος*, a kind of murder. In the end, Odysseus does not seem to give their plotting against Telemachos much consideration, since he does not mention it in his indictment, not even when responding to Eurymachos’ mention of it.

Although the poet presents these acts as the suitors’ crimes (stage four), comparing this narrative to other *tisis* narratives reveals that they are actually a better fit for the preparation stage (stage three). The suitors have not yet committed murder or adultery. They feast, scheme, and woo, but these actions more naturally parallel a preliminary stage of the prototypical narrative of *tisis*: Aigisthos woos Klytaimnestra and schemes against Agamemnon before actually committing the crimes for which Orestes kills him. To return to the structural framework I laid out earlier, the poet has combined two stages in Odysseus’ *tisis* narrative: the preparation for the offense (three) and the commission of the offense itself (four). Placing Odysseus’ *tisis* sequence beside Orestes’ in the diagrammatic representation I have used previously helps to clarify this point (see table 4.1):

43. Danek ad 22.48–53 notes that this alternative motivation is cited only to push it to the background and focus on crimes against the *oikos*. At 1.388–98 Telemachos seems to be willing to give up being *βασιλεύς*—which we may translate as “prince,” though we must recognize it does not signify hereditary monarchy, rather preeminent ruler among other aristocrats (Thalmann [1998] 9). For Telemachos, being *ἄναξ*, “lord,” over his *oikos* and possessions is what matters, as he makes clear (1.397–98); Eurymachos answers by claiming to be willing to allow Telemachos to remain in this position, but the role of *βασιλεύς* is to be left for the gods to decide (1.399–404).

Table 4.1 *tisis* Narratives of Odysseus and Orestes Compared

Order	Event/State		
	Generic <i>tisis</i> Sequence	Odysseus-suitors <i>tisis</i> Sequence	"Oresteia" <i>tisis</i> Sequence
1	Background: master is absent.	Odysseus has left Ithaca.	Agamemnon has left Mycenae.
2	Unheeded warning; grounds for <i>ἄτασθαλίαι</i> .	Suitors warned (several times); they are not persuaded.	Hermes warns Aigisthos; he is not persuaded.
3	Plotting and preparation I.	Suitors woo Penelope, plot against and devastate Odysseus' household.	Aigisthos woos Klyt., plots against Agamemnon.
4	Precipitating offense.	(Suitors woo Penelope, plot against and devastate Odysseus' household.)	Adultery and murder.
5	Plotting and preparation II.	Odysseus returns, plots against the suitors.	Orestes returns.
6	Retributive act.	Odysseus kills suitors and unfaithful servants.	Orestes kills Aigisthos and Klytaimnestra.
7	New conditions: former order is restored.	Suitors have repaid; Odysseus restored as ruler.	Aigisthos has repaid in full.

I have already discussed how despoiling Odysseus' home symbolizes murder. As for the suitors' wooing of Penelope, this is only an offense because Odysseus is still alive. Indeed, their suit, on one view, is quite reasonable: nearly everyone believes Odysseus to be dead, and only in the seventh year after he should have returned with the other Achaeans who went to Troy did they begin to pursue her.⁴⁴ Once they entered Penelope's home as suitors, they would be entitled to hospitality for the duration of their suit. The suitors' pursuit follows the pattern

44. Whether the suitors' wooing is in its third or fourth year is unclear. The text is inconsistent: see West (2013) 103.

of a well-established convention, especially in its culmination in a contest of athletic prowess—in this case, the stringing and shooting of Odysseus' bow.⁴⁵ While the length of the suitors' stay in her home and the consequent scale of their feasting are exceptional, they are not in principle knowingly criminal. And, as Antinoös argues (2.87–92, 123–28), Penelope herself might be considered the one to blame for the devastation to the household, since she has delayed her decision on a husband for three years.

The poet has assimilated the suitors' wooing to the more typical narrative pattern in which an adulterer pursues a woman he knows to have a living husband, like Ares' seduction of Aphrodite, Aigisthos' of Klytaimnestra, and Paris' of Helen. In all three of these cases, the wife willingly (or perhaps willingly, in the case of Helen) succumbed to the adulterer. Aware of these parallels and perhaps of certain variant traditions about Penelope, the poet's auditors would have understood that Odysseus was anxious about his wife's fidelity. Other (necessarily later) sources report different traditions about Penelope in which she succumbed to the suitors' advances. In the epitome of pseudo-Apollodorus, two alternatives to the myth of a faithful Penelope are preserved (Apollod. *Epit.* 7.38–39):

τινὲς δὲ Πηνελόπην ὑπὸ Ἀντινόου φθαρεῖσαν λέγουσιν ὑπὸ Ὀδυσσεώς πρὸς τὸν πατέρα Ἰκάριον ἀποσταλῆναι, γενομένην δὲ τῆς Ἀρκαδίας κατὰ Μαντίνειαν ἐξ Ἑρμοῦ τεκεῖν Πᾶνα· ἄλλοι δὲ δι' Ἀμφινόμον ὑπὸ Ὀδυσσεώς αὐτοῦ τελευτῆσαι· διαφθαρῆναι γὰρ αὐτὴν ὑπὸ τούτου λέγουσιν.

Some say that Penelope, having been corrupted by Antinoös, was sent back by Odysseus to her father Ikarios, and that, having come to Arcadia in Mantinea, she bore Pan to Hermes. Others say that on account of Amphinomos she died at the hands of Odysseus. For, they say, she was corrupted by him.

In some stranger versions, Penelope bore Pan by all the suitors while Odysseus was away.⁴⁶ Pausanias reports a similar alternative told in Mantinea (8.12.6):

45. Compare the legendary contests for Helen (Hes. fr. 196–204), for the (second) marriage to the daughters of Danaos (Pind. *Pyth.* 9.105–25, Apollod. *Bibl.* 2.1.5)—even for the first marriage to Penelope (Paus. 3.12.1), which Pausanias says Ikarios conducted on the model of Danaos. There is also the (perhaps) historical example of Kleisthenes (Hdt. 6.126–31), who entertained suitors of his daughter for a full year. Penelope's situation deviates from these examples because the suitors are wooing her at her supposedly deceased husband's home, rather than directing their suit at her father. But none of these cases involves a widow who had already established another household. On the parallels, see Thalmann (1998) 153–70.

46. See the scholia to Lycophron (Scheer ad 772ter), Servius *Commentarii* ad 2.44.

Μαντινέων δὲ ὁ ἐς αὐτὴν λόγος Πηνελόπην φησὶν ὑπ' Ὀδυσσέως καταγνωσθεῖσαν ὡς ἐπισπαστοὺς ἐσαγάγοιτο ἐς τὸν οἶκον, καὶ ἀποπεμφθεῖσαν ὑπ' αὐτοῦ, τὸ μὲν παραντίκα ἐς Λακεδαίμονα ἀπελθεῖν, χρόνῳ δὲ ὕστερον ἐκ τῆς Σπάρτης ἐς Μαντίνειαν μετοικῆσαι, καὶ οἱ τοῦ βίου τὴν τελευτὴν ἐνταῦθα συμβῆναι.

The Mantineans' story about Penelope says that she, having been condemned by Odysseus for bringing enticers⁴⁷ into the home and having been sent away by him, went off immediately to Sparta and then later she migrated from Sparta to Mantinea. She came to the end of her life there.

In addition to these alternatives preserved in mythic tradition, the poem itself holds forth the possibility at several points that Penelope could be won over by the suitors and become unfaithful, as Marylin Katz has demonstrated.⁴⁸ This, of course, does not occur in our *Odyssey*—though a general sentiment that *as a rule* women are untrustworthy pervades the poem. (Consider the examples of Klytaimnestra, Helen, and Aphrodite, and especially Agamemnon's comments at 11.456.⁴⁹ Penelope and Eurykleia are the exceptions that prove the rule.)

Anxiety about Penelope's faithfulness is palpable, just beneath the surface of the poem. Several scholars have noted the similarities between Penelope and her female servants and argued that the servants are thus the site upon which latent anxieties about Penelope's fidelity are displaced.⁵⁰ This is especially the case with

47. The word Pausanias uses for the suitors, ἐπισπαστός, is a rare adjective used substantively. In Homer, it means something like "self-caused" (*Od.* 24.462). In the present context, its meaning seems to be the same as the middle voice of the cognate verb ἐπισπάω: "induce, provoke, entice" (cf. *Thuc.* 3.44.4). It implies persuasion and enticement, but not necessarily capitulation. Therefore, in this version, Odysseus may have condemned Penelope simply for allowing the suitors into their home, where they "enticed" her, even though she did not succumb to them.

48. Katz (1991) 54–63: Penelope's faithfulness "is complicated by the network of alternative scenarios in which it is encased" (63). For instance, at 13.333–38 Athena attributes Odysseus' wariness to go immediately to his home after arriving on Ithaca to his doubts about Penelope's faithfulness. Zeitlin (1996) 19–52 argues that Penelope's fidelity is never actually proven.

49. Alden (2017) 112–14 shows that the paradigms of these unfaithful women give rise to some doubt (at least in the mind of Odysseus before he observes her himself) about the faithfulness of Penelope.

50. See Fulkerson (2002) 344: "Based on many similarities between Penelope and Melanthe and the maids . . . the question of Penelope's fidelity is almost entirely displaced onto her servants." See also Levine (1987), Olson (1989a) 140: "The serving-girls who slept with [the suitors] are executed as well, doomed by their uncomfortably close association with, but radical dissimilarity to their mistress." Katz (1991) 132 writes that the comparison implied between Melanthe and Penelope "displaces the question of sexual misconduct from Penelope on the faithless serving-woman and thus functions to absolve Penelope from the suspicion

the servant Melantho, who functions as a contrastive doublet for Penelope: she abuses the disguised Odysseus (18.327–36, 19.65–69)—in contrast to Penelope’s kindness—and she sleeps with a leader of the suitors, Eurymachos, (18.325)—in contrast to Penelope’s chastity. Accordingly, when the suitors consort with the unfaithful female servants, who, in the words of Nancy Felson-Rubin, “stand as metonyms for Penelope,” they enact by proxy an adulterous affair with Penelope.⁵¹ The adulterous sense of the suitors’ relations with the servant women may also be felt in the fact that the servant women hold a similar position in the household—both of them being potential mothers of legitimate heirs.⁵² Thus, the middle charge in Odysseus’ indictment—that the suitors slept with Odysseus’ female servants—suggests that the suitors are liable for an offense similar and equivalent to adultery. As Odysseus kills the suitors as if they were guilty of this crime, his allies execute the servant women in a rather grisly manner. They die in a way appropriate for an adulterous wife, and so substitute for the punishment of Penelope that cannot happen in our *Odyssey*. The servants are executed by hanging—a “not . . . clean death” (μη . . . καθαρῶ θανάτῳ, 22.462). Hanging is a traditionally “fitting” punishment for adultery: to hang a woman is to close off and strangle her στόμα (“mouth”)—a word that can also denote female genitals. Thus, hanging is symbolically a punishment against the especially offending part of the adulteress’ body.⁵³ In this connection, Eurymachos’ response to Odysseus’ three charges is telling, for he mentions only eating up Odysseus’ household and wooing Penelope. Eurymachos evidently thinks that, in Odysseus’ mind, seducing his maids is so closely connected with wooing Penelope that he need not even mention the maids.

of wrong-doing”; Felson-Rubin (1994) 87, Doherty (1995) 154–55, Thalmann (1998) 71–74, Grethlein (2017) 218.

51. Felson-Rubin (1994) 87; Fulkerson (2002) 344–47: “Once we realize that Penelope’s faithfulness is displaced onto her serving women (some of whom are loyal and some not), we can see the issue of chastity as preemptively closed to discussion by the hanging of the unfaithful servants. . . . With the maids’ death, the issue of loyalty raised by their behavior has now been resolved, and the comparison to Penelope is abruptly ended. . . . The women servants are scapegoats and ‘deserve’ such a death because they are the female counterparts to the suitors as well as the stand-ins for all of the unfaithful or potentially unfaithful women of the poem.”

52. See Yamagata (1994) 28–29, who notes that Megapenthes, heir to Menelaos, was his son by a servant.

53. For an in-depth discussion of the punitive symbolism and logic of hanging women, see Fulkerson (2002) 341–43. She cites relevant usages of στόμα as genitals. On hanging as a “fitting” punishment for adultery, see the description of punishments for adulterous women in the *Apocalypse of Peter* 7, on which see Fiensy (1983) 256. Canevaro (2018) 90 offers a different but complementary perspective on what she calls the “poetic justice” of the female servants’ execution.

In short, Odysseus executes the suitors and the unfaithful servant women in punishment for adultery and murder (or the symbolic equivalent), even though, strictly speaking, they are innocent of these charges.

4.5 *Stages Five, Six, and Seven: Odysseus Plots, Executes his Revenge, and Is Restored*

Odysseus carefully prepares his revenge against a superior force.⁵⁴ Guileful plotting is a typical feature in other revenge plots. Compare how Hephaistos, in his pursuit of revenge against Ares and Aphrodite, “broods over evil in his heart” (*κακὰ φρεσὶ βυσσοδομεύων*, 8.273), devising a “trap” (*δόλον*, 276). Although, in the *Odyssey*, Orestes is never in so many words portrayed as “plotting” his revenge, such a characterization would be consistent with his portrayal in the wider tradition, as is evident in the *Libation Bearers*. Similarly, Odysseus “broods over evil” (*κακὰ βυσσοδομεύων*, 20.184), as he suffers in silence the abuse of Melanthios and contemplates his revenge (cf. 17.465, 495). In the *Odyssey*, this phrase connotes plotting a violent trap, as Odysseus himself earlier did against Polyphemos (9.316) and also as the suitors did against Telemachos (4.676, 17.66). The key terms for this craftiness and plotting are *δόλος* and *μητις* and their cognates. As relates to Odysseus’ revenge, this terminology describes a range of actions: among other things, hiding his true feelings before Penelope (*δόλος*: 19.212), devising a crafty speech to get a chance to use the bow (*δολοφρονέω*, 21.274; cf. 17.51), finding a stratagem to escape Polyphemos’ cave—an incident Odysseus explicitly compares to his present circumstances among the suitors (*μητις*, 20.20). This aspect of revenge is part of the “cunning versus force” motif discussed in chapter 3. And, as I will discuss in more detail later in the chapter, it is part of two alternative plot trajectories for how Odysseus executes his revenge.

Secondly, in several places the poem has made the theme of Odysseus’ return into an aspect of this preparation stage in the *tisis* theme: Telemachos imagines how Odysseus will first “come from somewhere” (*ποθεν ἐλθών*, 1.115, 256, et al.) before taking revenge. Athena affirms this narrative order, when, in the guise of Mentès, she hypothesizes that Odysseus “having returned, will take revenge” (*νοστήσας ἀποτείσεται*, 1.268; cf. 14.163, 15.177). She thus subordinates *nostos* to *tisis*, making his return into a precondition for his revenge. It is an obvious point that Odysseus must first return in order to take his revenge. And it is paralleled by Orestes’ return from Athens to Mycenae after seven years before his revenge upon Aigisthos (1.40–41, 3.305–8). But there is also a tension here, since in the

54. De Jong (1993) 30–38, (2001) ad 13.372–439.

prototypical case of Orestes, *tisis* results from a failed nostos: Agamemnon is killed on his way home. The detail that Agamemnon dies not in his own home, but in Aigisthos', before he ever reaches his own palace, is sometimes missed.⁵⁵ (It differs from Aeschylus' later version.) The *Odyssey* is explicit that the slaughter occurs in Aigisthos' home (24.22), and Proteus tells Menelaos that Agamemnon perished "during his return" (ἐν νόστῳ, 4.497)—that is, while still on his way home. Likewise, Aias perishes during his nostos. And apart from Odysseus' nostos, the stories of successful nostoi in the *Odyssey*—those of Diomedes, Philoktetes, Idomeneus, Neoptolemos, Menelaos, and Nestor—do not involve any further complications after the hero reaches his home. Likewise, the easier nostos that Teiresias foretells for Odysseus if he leaves Helios' cattle unharmed avoids the troubles of the suitors (11.110–11)—that is, avoids his *tisis* narrative altogether. Odysseus' *tisis* and nostos, as they actually happen in the poem, are thus exceptional to the extent that he is the successful protagonist in both narratives.⁵⁶ The desire to combine these two plot patterns (whether it was the idea of the poet of our *Odyssey* or a development further back in the tradition) provides another reason for making the suitors' preliminary actions—wooing, feasting, and scheming—count as revenge-worthy crimes: Odysseus can thus exact retribution for figurative murder and adultery without having to die and while retaining Penelope as a faithful wife. (The poem even at points envisions an alternative in which the *tisis* narrative belongs to Telemachos as avenger of his dead father, like Orestes.⁵⁷) I do not mean to imply that the stories of Odysseus' nostos and *tisis* had independent origins. This may be the case, but impossible to prove and perhaps unlikely given the intricate, interlinked structure of the different parts of the poem.⁵⁸ But the logics of *tisis* and nostos are different, and making Odysseus the protagonist of both in one poem entails making certain adjustments.

55. Cf. Grethlein (2017) 206–207, who writes that Agamemnon was killed "in his own home . . ." (*in seinem eigenen Haus*). Alden (2017) 88–89 offers two possible interpretations of ἐλθὼν ἀπολέσθαι ἐφέστιος at 3.234, one supposing Agamemnon perished at his own hearth, the other that "he was killed on the verge of getting home, not quite achieving his *nostos*."

56. My interpretation that *nostos* and *tisis* lie in tension differs from the more common view held among scholars: Bakker (2013) 13–35, Lord (1960) 158–97, Schadewaldt (1958) 23.

57. See 1.289–302. To be clear, the scenario Athena lays out here involves Telemachos taking revenge once Odysseus is found to have died on his way back from Troy (and not at the hands of the suitors). But she also makes the parallel between Orestes and Telemachos explicit.

58. Earlier generations of analytical scholars did argue that Odysseus' return and revenge were once independent poems, only later combined (with some other minor additions) into the *Odyssey* as we have it. The standard view was set by Kirchhoff (1879), largely followed by Fick (1883), Bethe (1922), Merkelbach (1951), and Page (1955).

When the suitors finally face retribution (stage six), the poem presents their deaths as a talionic punishment, sufferings that seem to approach the ideal of negative reciprocity: a precisely calculated return of identical harm, so that the offender becomes the victim of his own offense. Earlier in this chapter, I showed how the suitors' depredations are represented symbolically as adultery and especially as murder, even cannibalism. This symbolic equivalence appears to justify Odysseus' extreme violence. From the first book, the poem has foreshadowed the violent end facing the suitors. The first threat Telemachos utters to the suitors links their fate to their trespasses by its very diction (1.376–80):

εἰ δ' ὕμιν δοκέει τόδε λωϊτέρον καὶ ἄμεινον
 ἔμμεναι, ἀνδρὸς ἐνὸς βίοντον νήποινον ὀλέσθαι,
 κείρετ'· ἐγὼ δὲ θεοὺς ἐπιβώσομαι αἰὲν ἐόντας,
 αἳ κέ ποθι Ζεὺς δῶσι παλίντιτα ἔργα γενέσθαι·
 νήποινοί κεν ἔπειτα δόμων ἔντοσθεν ὀλοισθε. 380

*But if this seems to you to be a more profitable and better thing,
 to destroy the livelihood of one man without recompense,
 then waste it. But I will call up the gods who are eternal for help,
 in the hope that somehow Zeus may provide that there be acts
 of vengeance in return.*

Then would you perish without requital in the halls. 380

In the same metrical position and just three lines apart, Telemachos uses similar forms of the same verb (ὀλέσθαι, ὀλοισθε) to describe first the loss of Odysseus' "life" (βίος) and then the hoped-for death of the suitors. As discussed earlier, the striking language of "destroying" Odysseus' βίος "without recompense"—which in context denotes consuming his stores—connotes getting away with murder. But in the last line of his threat Telemachos uses the adjective νήποινος in its more usual way to describe killings "without" (νη-) "requital" (ποινή). The suitors' "unavenged" deaths will answer for their "unavenged" destruction of Odysseus' livelihood.⁵⁹

After Odysseus has strung his bow and made the trick shot set in the bow contest, he makes a programmatic statement before launching into his attack upon the suitors: "But now it is the hour even for the feast to be prepared for the Achaeans" (νῦν δ' ὥρῃ καὶ δόρπον Ἀχαιοῖσιν τετυκέσθαι, 21.428). Odysseus addresses these words to Telemachos, for whom they have one, deadly intended meaning that he conveys through ambiguity because of the need for discretion.

59. See pp. 128–29 earlier. See also Grethlein (2017) 217–18.

But Odysseus also speaks this before all the assembled suitors, for whom he intends his words to have another meaning. While the suitors think it is time to celebrate a proper wedding “feast” and that they are the “Achaean” for whom the meal is to be prepared, an ironic meaning comes through as well: the “feast” will be the slaying of the suitors themselves, who will die enclosed in the house like cattle for the slaughter,⁶⁰ and the “Achaean” for whom this meal is to be prepared are Odysseus and his allies. Thus, a programmatic ambiguity at the outset of the feast heightens the sense of symmetrical exchange of crime and punishment.

A similar ambiguous and euphemistic statement by Athena (in the guise of Mentēs) already in Book 1 foreshadowed the irony of the “wedding feast” of Book 22 (1.265–66):

τοῖος ἔων μνηστῆρσιν ὁμιλήσειεν Ὀδυσσεύς·
πάντες κ' ὠκύμοροί τε γενοίαιτο πικρόγαμοί τε. 265

*Would that Odysseus might consort with the suitors in such strength.
Then they all would be swift-fated and bitter-wed.* 265

The compound adjective *πικρόγαμοί* establishes a metaphoric connection between marriage and death. As Richard Seaford has noted, the suitors' deaths in Book 22 come at the point in the narrative when the suitors expect a wedding. The sequence of events in these final books, including contests, feasts, and an eventual consummation, parallels the traditional form of a wedding.⁶¹ This narrative metaphor serves to render the suitors' deaths into a form of symmetrical punishment for their crime of wooing Odysseus' wife. The punishment they face for their attempts at making a marriage that Penelope would regard as “loathsome” (*στυγερὸς γάμος*, 1.249, 18.272) is that they, instead, experience a marriage that turns out “bitter” for them. (The adjective *πικρός* is only used four times in the *Odyssey*—once, notably, describing Odysseus' arrow right before it strikes Antinoös: 22.8.) Through a kind of hypallage, Odysseus' (re-)marriage to Penelope redounds upon the suitors in a wedding that brings their deaths. The “bitter” exchange of death for marriage, of funeral for wedding comes through

60. The simile at 22.299–301 compares the suitors to cattle. Also, the image of a “hideous groan” (*στόνος* . . . *ἄεικής*, 308) arising “with their heads being struck” (*κράτων τυπτομένων*, 309) seems more appropriate for the slaughter of cattle. See Buchan (2004) 259 n. 50. Nagler (1990) 340–41 shows how the suitors (like the companions on Thrinakia) become themselves victims (like cattle) of a hunter/sacrificer (Odysseus) by virtue of their criminal feasting.

61. Seaford (1994) 30–38.

in Telemachos' threatening words to Ktesippos that his father would prepare for him "a funeral in place of a wedding" (ἀντὶ γάμοιο . . . τάφον, 20.307).

As we saw with the servant women, the very manner of death can indicate a kind of symmetry. Odysseus' first victim is the leading suitor Antinoös, whom he shoots with his "bitter" arrow through the throat while he is obliviously drinking a cup of wine from Odysseus' own stores. In the act, Odysseus creates a series of reversals and symmetries that the poet exploits in evocative language (22.8–21):

ἦ, καὶ ἐπ' Ἀντινόῳ ἰθύνετο πικρὸν οἶστόν.
 ἦ τοι ὁ καλὸν ἄλεισον ἀναιρήσεσθαι ἔμελλε,
 χρύσειον ἄμφωτον, καὶ δὴ μετὰ χερσὶν ἐνώμα, 10
 ὄφρα πίοι οἶνοιο φόνος· δέ οἱ οὐκ ἐνὶ θυμῷ
 μέμβλετο. τίς κ' οἴοιτο μετ' ἀνδράσι δαιτυμόνεσσι
 μοῦνον ἐνὶ πλεόνεσσι, καὶ εἰ μάλα καρτερός εἴη,
 οἳ τεύξειν θάνατόν τε κακὸν καὶ κῆρα μέλαιναν;
 τὸν δ' Ὀδυσσεὺς κατὰ λαιμόν ἐπισχόμενος βάλεν ἰῶ, 15
 ἀντικρὺ δ' ἀπαλοῖο δι' αὐχένος ἦλυθ' ἄκωκῇ.
 ἐκλίνθη δ' ἐτέρωσε, δέπας δέ οἱ ἔκπεσε χειρὸς
 βλημένου, αὐτίκα δ' αὐλὸς ἀνὰ ῥίνας παχὺς ἦλθεν
 αἵματος ἀνδρομέοιο· θοῶς δ' ἀπὸ εἶο τράπεζαν
 ὦσε ποδὶ πλήξας, ἀπὸ δ' εἶδατα χεῦεν ἔραζε· 20
 σίτός τε κρέα τ' ὅπτα φορύνετο . . .

*Then he spoke and aimed a bitter arrow straight at Antinoös also.
 Indeed he was about to lift a fine goblet,
 a golden, double-handled one, and indeed with his hands he was holding it 10
 in order to drink of the wine. Killing was not a concern to him in his spirit.
 Who would think that among men who were guests at a feast
 one man, in the midst of a greater number, even if he was very mighty,
 would fashion evil death and black doom for him?
 But at him Odysseus took aim and shot with an arrow in the gullet. 15
 Straight on through his tender neck passed the point.
 He bent to one side, and the cup fell from his hand, as he was struck.
 Immediately up through his nostrils came a thick spout (?)
 of human blood. Quickly he thrust the table from him,
 having struck it with his foot, and spilled the food on the floor. 20
 The bread and cooked meat were defiled . . .*

First, Odysseus strikes the main instrument by which Antinoös committed his crimes of consumption—his "gullet" (λαιμός)—a word that refers to specifically

the part of the throat down which food and drink pass, as opposed to the windpipe. *λαιμός* is a rare word in Homer. In the one place where it is more than just a target for an enemy's attack, *λαιμός* is associated with eating and drinking: Achilles foreswears food until he can avenge the death of Patroklos, announcing, "Before this, not at all down my dear gullet would pass neither drink nor food . . ." (*πρὶν δ' οὐ πως ἄν ἔμοιγε φίλον κατὰ λαιμὸν ἱεῖη οὐ πόσις οὐδὲ βρωσίς*, *Il.* 19.209–10). In this case, as in Antinoös' death but in none of the other occurrences of the word, it appears with the preposition *κατά*, here with the sense of "down" toward the stomach. On one level, then, Odysseus shoots an arrow literally down Antinoös' throat, and he swallows his own punishment. Second, Odysseus kills him while he is in the midst of committing the very act that precipitates his demise—that is, consuming Odysseus' *βίोटος* in the form of wine. As the arrow goes down, so his blood comes "up" (*ἀνά*) and out his nose. The imagery of this "spout" of blood is unusual: it uses the word *αἰλός* in an otherwise unattested sense.⁶² The language thus stands out and suggests a symmetrical reversal: the wine Antinoös was in the midst of drinking, which signifies Odysseus himself, is now replaced by Antinoös' own expelled blood.

Furthermore, when Antinoös kicks the table over as he dies, "the bread and cooked meat (*κρέα*) were defiled (*φορύνετο*)."⁶³ On the surface, this may mean simply that his feast was spoiled by falling on the floor. However, it resonates with the earlier vision of the suitors' eating "blood-defiled meat" (*αἰμοφόρυκτα* . . . *κρέα*, 20.348) that preceded Theoklymenos' ecstatic prophecy. The adjective *αἰμοφόρυκτα* and the verb *φορύνω* and its cognate *φύρω* are rare and thus marked. The verbs refer only to defilement by blood (9.397, 18.21) or tears (17.130, 18.173, 19.596; *Il.* 24.162). Antinoös' blood shooting out his nose reinforces the sense that "human" blood has defiled the meal. That this is a human's blood is noted emphatically: it is *αἵματος ἀνδρομέοιο*. Suzanne Saïd notes that the adjective *ἀνδρόμεος* occurs only three other times, all as descriptions of Polyphemos' meal of "human meat" (*ἀνδρόμεια κρεῖ*, 9.297; cf. 347, 374). Thus, the true, "abominable character of the feast" is revealed through this "link between the images" of the suitors and an outright cannibal.⁶³ These three scenes—Polyphemos' meal,

62. The passage stretches the meaning of *αἰλός* significantly. *αἰλός* normally denotes pipes or tubes and, hence, the musical instrument. See *Lfgre*, s.v. *αἰλός* may carry the double sense of the English "spout": both the liquid and the tube through which it shoots, hence my translation. Perhaps the word choice here is motivated by the symmetry of having this spout/conduit balance the conduit of the *λαιμός*, as if Antinoös is discharging his throat.

63. Saïd (1979) 40–41. See also Brelinski (2015) 5; Bakker (2013) 94, who writes, "Their vision of blood-defiled chunks of meat [in Book 20] becomes reality when it is their own blood that pollutes the food. . . . The blood is Antinoös'. . . It is fitting that it is his blood that brings up

Theoklymenos' vision, and Antinoös' death—form a kind of triptych. Together they all reinforce the evil nature of the feasts described in each. And it is in the graphic punishment of Antinoös at the outset of Book 22 that the imagery culminates and its full weight is revealed.

The battle grows still bloodier and more gruesome. Odysseus and his allies come as close as they can to punishing their foes with their own symmetrical act of cannibalism, without actually crossing over that line themselves, when they mutilate Melanthios, the disloyal shepherd (22.475–77):

τοῦ δ' ἀπὸ μὲν ῥῖνάς τε καὶ οὐᾶτα νηλεῖ χαλκῷ
τάμνον μήδεά τ' ἐξέρυσαν, κυσὶν ὠμὰ δάσασθαι,
χεῖράς τ' ἡδὲ πόδας κόπτον κεκοτηότι θυμῷ. 475

*They were cutting off his nose and ears with merciless bronze,
and they tore out his genitals as raw flesh for dogs to eat,
and they were chopping off his hands and feet with an angered heart.* 475

To make his body a meal for a domesticated dog is to use the “intermediate between man and beast,” as James Redfield calls dogs, in order to engage in “vicarious cannibalism.”⁶⁴ The poem appears to signal the justice of this cannibalistic outcome with a provocative simile, when Eurykleia comes upon Odysseus at the end of the battle with the suitors, (22.401–6):

εὗρεν ἔπειτ' Ὀδυσῆα μετὰ κταμένοισι νέκυσσιν
αἵματι καὶ λύθρῳ πεπαλαγμένον ὥς τε λέοντα,
ὃς ῥά τε βεβρωκὼς βοὸς ἔρχεται ἀγραύλοιο·
πᾶν δ' ἄρα οἱ στῆθός τε παρήϊά τ' ἀμφοτέρωθεν
αἵματόεντα πέλει, δεινὸς δ' εἰς ὦπα ιδέσθαι·
ὥς Ὀδυσσεὺς πεπάλακτο πόδας καὶ χεῖρας ὑπερθεῖν. 405

*Then she found Odysseus among the slain corpses,
spattered with blood and gore like a lion
that comes having fed upon a field-dwelling ox.*

the suggestions of implicit cannibalism.” Alden (2017) 245, 249–50 concurs and further adds that early vase paintings depicted Polyphemos' blinding with the stake in his eye as similar to the description of Odysseus' arrow striking Antinoös' neck.

64. Redfield (1975) 193, 199: “To feed one's enemies to the dogs is vicarious cannibalism.” See also Saïd (1979) 27, who sees in this act a move from cannibalism as “simple metaphor” to “a sad reality.” Only, the horror of this act of revenge is kept at a safe distance by a “double mediation,” whereby Melanthios stands in for the suitors and the dogs for Odysseus' party.

*All its breast and cheeks on both sides
are bloody. It is fearsome to look upon in the face. 405
So Odysseus had been spattered on his feet and hands above.*

It is as if Odysseus has feasted upon his enemies, like a lion upon its prey. While lions are a common vehicle in similes that have heroes as their tenors, this one stands out for the focus it puts upon the lion as a carnivorous predator. This simile and Eurykleia's reaction to the sight of Odysseus have potentially sinister implications for the meaning of Odysseus' triumph, as I explore in more detail in the next chapter.

The result of Odysseus' *tisis* narrative (stage seven) is that his home is restored to its former order, and he will live the blessed, long life foretold to him by Teiresias (11.134–37; cf. 23.281–84):

θάνατος δέ τοι ἐξ ἁλὸς αὐτῷ
ἀβληχρὸς μάλα τοῖος ἐλεύσεται, ὅς κέ σε πέφνη 135
γῆρα ὑπο λιπαρῷ ἀρηνέον· ἀμφὶ δὲ λαοὶ
ὄλβιοι ἔσσονται. τὰ δέ τοι νημερτέα εἶρω.

*And death will come to you away from the sea,⁶⁵
a very easy one, which will strike you down 135
when you are overcome under comfortable old-age, and around you
your people will be blessed. I tell you this truly.*

To die an easy death when an old man, surrounded by a happy community, presupposes that Odysseus will resume his former status as an honored ruler. (However, as I discuss in more detail in the final chapter, this “happy ending” will not be quite as straightforward as it seems here.) The poet already in the opening scenes of the poem leads his auditors to expect this happy conclusion. When the poet first describes Telemachos, he portrays him as imagining the conclusion of the narrative—Odysseus' return, revenge, and restoration (1.114–17):

ἦστο γὰρ ἐν μνηστῆρσι φίλον τετιμμένος ἦτορ,
ὁσσόμενος πατέρ' ἐσθλὸν ἐνὶ φρεσίν, εἴ ποθεν ἔλθων 115
μνηστήρων τῶν μὲν σκέδασιν κατὰ δώματα θείη,
τιμὴν δ' αὐτὸς ἔχοι καὶ κτήμασιν οἷσιν ἀνάσσοι.

65. The phrase ἐξ ἁλός was later reinterpreted to mean “by means of the sea.” Some scholars have thought this later meaning to be present already in the *Odyssey*, but I concur with most scholars that this sense was not present in Homer: see most recently Tsagalis (2015) 392–93 with further bibliography.

For he sat among the suitors, troubled in his heart,
 seeing in his mind his noble father, if from somewhere returning 115
 he might make a scattering of the suitors in his halls
 and possess himself his honor and rule of his possessions.

The final element of Telemachos' vision of Odysseus' return is that he will again "possess his honor," which the suitors had taken from him by despoiling his home, mistreating his wife and son, and dishonoring his person in his guise as a beggar. Telemachos also foresees that he "will rule over his possessions." This second clause is an epexegetis of the first clause of the line: Odysseus' regained *timē* consists, primarily, in the goods of his household, which connote his position in society.

4.6 *Alternatives to Slaughter?*

Odysseus' restoration is predicated on slaughter. Every suitor and every unfaithful servant perishes. The poet did not have to tell the story this way. Odysseus could have acted differently. I already alluded to alternative versions of the myths surrounding Odysseus' reunion with Penelope. There is a similar diversity of alternatives regarding Odysseus' fate after the events of the poem.⁶⁶ Any attempt to reconstruct in detail alternatives to our *Odyssey* and their historical relationship with it are speculative. However, the poem itself and the testimony of parallel mythological sources do reveal in broad outline the existence of alternative versions of the plot, and the choice of plot peculiar to our *Odyssey* has definite implications for the troubling meaning of *tisis* in the poem. We do not even need to assume that alternative versions of the poem existed in the performance traditions of archaic Greece in order for the narrative path our poem follows to gain meaning by comparison to alternative narrative paths. Characters in the poem at many points allude to different ways the story might go. These allusions reveal that there are two especially significant choices that the poet made involving the last three books of the poem. First, the poet chose to have Odysseus triumph in a general, indiscriminate slaughter. Second, he chose to have the poem continue after Odysseus' and Penelope's reunion. I consider the implications of the second choice in the final chapter. Here, I examine the first choice. What were the different narrative paths for how Odysseus would handle the suitors? And why did the poet choose the deadliest option? I argue that he did so in order to reveal the dangers inherent in *tisis*.

66. See Malkin (1998), Hartmann (1917).

Teiresias' prophecy of Odysseus' homeward journey contains two alternative ways that his revenge might unfold. Two narrative paths are set before the poet's auditors (11.118–20):

ἀλλ' ἣ τοι κείνων γε βίας ἀποτείσσει ἐλθών·
 αὐτὰρ ἐπὴν μνηστῆρας ἐνὶ μεγάροισι τεοῖσι
 κτείνῃς ἢ ἐδόλῳ ἢ ἀμφοδὸν δῶξ' ἑ χαλκῷ . . . 120

*Surely you will come and take revenge for the violence of those men.
 But after you have killed the suitors in your halls
 either by a trick or openly with sharp bronze . . . 120*

Odysseus may take his vengeance deceitfully (δόλῳ), using disguise, trickery, and secretive lethal measures, or he may do it openly (ἀμφοδόν) in an obvious attack on the suitors, as though meeting them on a battlefield, before the eyes of all. The same pair of alternatives appears elsewhere. In the lying story that Odysseus in his Cretan guise tells Eumaios, he claims he learned about Odysseus from the Thesprotians, who said he was visiting the oracle in Dodona to learn whether he should return “openly or secretly” (ἢ ἀμφοδὸν ἢ κρυφηδόν, 14.330; cf. 19.299; 1.296 with Telemachos as subject). As it turns out, the poem appears to be headed down the path of δόλος and κρυφηδόν: Odysseus acquires a physical disguise from Athena upon landing on Ithaca (13.397–403); he assumes several false identities while trying to insinuate himself into his home;⁶⁷ he plots and sets a trap—barring the doors of his house to enclose the suitors within it and hiding their weapons in his storeroom—to catch the suitors unprepared and vulnerable to attack (19.1–13, 21.235–41); he begins his assault with a surprise first strike, shooting one of the leading suitors, Antinoös, unawares. The use of the bow in particular is connected with a darker, less heroic mode of attack. The disguised Athena tells a story of how Odysseus came to Ilos to get poison to smear on his arrows (1.257–64). Athena then utters a wish: “Would that Odysseus, being such a man, consort with the suitors” (τοῖος ἐὼν μνηστῆρσιν ὀμιλήσειεν Ὀδυσσεύς, 265). Ironically, Athena well knows that Odysseus will in fact return: she and Zeus have determined that this is their plan. But the details are yet to be worked out. When she makes this wish, she is saying that she hopes that *this sort* (τοῖος) of Odysseus—namely, the secretive and treacherous Odysseus of some mythic traditions—would return. The poet has yet to make clear what kind of return Odysseus will have, and even what kind of Odysseus he will be. In effect, Athena

67. See Odysseus' lying tales: 13.253–86, 14.192–359, 17.415–44, 19.165–299.

is hoping that the more devious Odysseus will become the protagonist of this poem and use especially treacherous means to kill the suitors.⁶⁸

But when the climactic moment of the slaughter of the suitors commences, Odysseus becomes an open, Iliadic warrior. He suddenly reveals his identity by “stripping off his rags” (γυμνώθη ῥακέων, 22.1). The phrase here might actually mean making himself naked.⁶⁹ Whether fully unclothed or not, the metaphoric suggestion is that Odysseus has completely stripped himself of all pretense.⁷⁰ He is now fully himself and will assault the suitors in the open with naked force. One variation on the “open force” narrative path has Odysseus returning not alone, but at the head of a band of men.⁷¹ There are two allusions to this alternative in the *Odyssey*. The first is voiced by Nestor as an encouragement to Telemachos that his father might still return (3.216–17):

τίς δ' οἶδ' εἴ κέ ποτέ σφι βίας ἀποτείσεται ἐλθών,
ἦ ὃ γε μούνος ἐὼν ἦ καὶ σύμπαντες Ἀχαιοί;

*Who knows if Odysseus may someday return and take vengeance on their
violence,
either he alone or all the Achaeans too?*

As it happens in our poem, Odysseus does come “alone,” but coming with “all the Achaeans” is presented as a plausible alternative. The second allusion comes when Eumaios and Odysseus in his Cretan guise are exchanging stories about Odysseus. Eumaios tells of how an Aitolian once visited him and told him a

68. Danek ad 1.255–66, 13.389–96; see also Danek (2002b) on the alternative tradition of a more sinister Odysseus.

69. However, Eurykleia's comments at 22.485–89 that Odysseus should not stand in his hall with his shoulders wrapped in rags might mean he left some of his rags on: thus Stanford ad 22.1 and the scholiast to the line. Or, perhaps this is just Eurykleia's way of being discrete? Elsewhere in the *Odyssey* the verb γυμνῶω emphatically means naked: cf. 6.222, 10.341; but cf. also *Il.* 22.124–25, where it means without armor.

70. There is a common Homeric association between clothing and identity: Schadewaldt (1959), Fenik (1974) 61–63, Block (1985), Yamagata (2005), Canevaro (2018) 54.

71. On this alternative narrative in which Odysseus could have returned “as the leader of an invasion force,” see Marks (2008) 8, 90–92, who sees our *Odyssey* as following only the “cunning” path in opposition to an alternative path of open warfare. For Marks the “open” path necessarily includes an open landing in Ithaca at the head of an army, such as the return entailed in the “lying story” Odysseus tells Eumaios (14.327–33). I, however, maintain with Danek ad 1.255–66 that the conduct of the *Mnesterophonia* is consistent with the second, “force” path in most respects. A strictly “cunning” path would have involved a less heroic form of attack, such as the alternative Danek detects of fighting from a distance with poisoned arrows.

lie about Odysseus' imminent return. This Aitolian claimed that he had seen Odysseus preparing to return (14.382–85):

φῆ δέ μιν ἐν Κρήτεσσι παρ' Ἰδομενῆϊ ἰδέσθαι
 νῆας ἀκείόμενον, τὰς οἱ ξυνέαξαν ἄλλαι·
 καὶ φάτ' ἐλεύσεσθαι ἢ ἐς θέρος ἢ ἐς ὀπώρην,
 πολλὰ χρήματ' ἄγοντα, σὺν ἀντιθέοισ' ἐτάροισι. 385

*He said he saw him among the Cretans at the house of Idomeneus,
 mending his ships, which the winds had damaged.
 And he said that he would return, either in the summer or harvest time,
 bringing many goods, with god-like companions. 385*

This is a lie, but a plausible one. It envisions a different, though similar narrative of Odysseus' wanderings: like the narrative in our *Odyssey*, this Odysseus was beset by storms, stayed with a host in foreign land, and brought back much wealth. But unlike our *Odyssey*, this Odysseus returns with multiple ships and companions. Eumaios had said that the suitors listened to such visitors (14.375–77). Evidently they feared the vengeance Odysseus might bring, possibly with an entire armed band. In both the case of Nestor's and the Aitolian's speeches, there is an allusion to the possibility that Odysseus could return home, undisguised, at the head of an allied force.

This strict bifurcation between the "cunning" and the "open force" paths of revenge is somewhat overly schematized as I present it here. Though these are different kinds of action, our *Odyssey* does overlay them, so that Odysseus' success in his open combat is in great part due to his cunning. The result of this combination of modes and ethics of retributive success is a full-scale slaughter in an Iliadic battle, but prepared for and conducted using the sort of devious tactics for which Odysseus, hero of the stratagem of the Trojan horse, was also known. But it is another way the crisis in Odysseus' home might have been resolved. The poet not only alludes to this possibility, but even has another character present it in detail as a viable alternative for the characters in the poem to follow.⁷²

After Odysseus shoots and kills Antinoös and reveals himself before the rest of the suitors with his indictment of their crimes (22.34–41), Eurymachos tries to stop Odysseus from continuing his violent revenge in a speech designed to placate him (44–59):

72. See Danek ad 22.54–59, de Jong ad 13.372–439, Marks (2008) 65–67.

Εὐρύμαχος δέ μιν οἶος ἀμειβόμενος προσέειπεν·
 “εἰ μὲν δὴ Ὀδυσσεὺς Ἰθακήσιος εἰλήλουθας,
 45 ταῦτα μὲν αἵσιμα εἶπες, ὅσα ῥέζεσκον Ἀχαιοί,
 πολλὰ μὲν ἐν μεγάροισιν ἀτάσθαλα, πολλὰ δ’ ἐπ’ ἀγροῦ.
 ἀλλ’ ὁ μὲν ἤδη κεῖται, ὃς αἴτιος ἔπλετο πάντων,
 Ἀντίνοος· οὗτος γὰρ ἐπῆλθεν τάδε ἔργα,
 οὔ τι γάμου τόσσον κεκηρημένος οὐδὲ χατίζων,
 50 ἀλλ’ ἄλλα φρονέων, τά οἱ οὐκ ἐτέλεσσε Κρονίων,
 ὄφρ’ Ἰθάκης κατὰ δῆμον ἐϋκτιμένης βασιλείουι
 αὐτός, ἀτὰρ σὸν παῖδα κατακτείνειε λοχῆσας.
 νῦν δ’ ὁ μὲν ἐν μοίρῃ πέφαιτο, σὺ δὲ φρίδες λαῶν
 σῶν· ἀτὰρ ἄμμες ὀπισθεν ἀρεσσάμενοι κατὰ δῆμον,
 55 ὅσσα τοι ἐκπέποται καὶ ἐδήδοται ἐν μεγάροισι,
 τιμὴν ἀμφὶς ἄγοντες εἰκοσάβοιον ἕκαστος,
 χαλκὸν τε χρυσόν τ’ ἀποδώσομεν, εἰς ὃ κε σὸν κῆρ
 ἱανθῇ· πρὶν δ’ οὔ τι νεμεσσητὸν κεχολῶσθαι.”

Eurymachos alone addressed him in answer:

“If truly you are Odysseus the Ithacan, come home,
 45 you said these things justly, as many things as the Achaeans were doing—
 many reckless acts in the palace and many in the fields.
 But he already lies dead who was to blame for everything,
 Antinoös. For he brought these deeds to pass,
 not so much wanting or craving marriage,
 50 but intending other things, which the son of Kronos did not
 bring about for him:
 that he might himself rule throughout the land of well-built Ithaca
 and ambush and kill your son.
 But now he has been slain in accordance with fate. But you, spare
 your own people.
 Hereafter we will make amends from the land
 55 for all of yours that has been drunk and eaten in the palace.
 Gathering the worth of twenty cattle, each of us separately,
 we will pay you back in bronze and gold until your heart
 is melted. Before this, it is not wrong to be angry.”

Eurymachos admits the justice of Odysseus' accusations: they did in fact commit
 “many acts of recklessness.” But Eurymachos denies responsibility: Antinoös is
 “to blame for everything,” but he was struck down “in accordance with fate”—
 his slaying was part of the just order of things, since Zeus did not want him to

succeed anyway.⁷³ Eurymachos then suggests that with him dead, Odysseus ought to spare the rest of them. They would collect from the land and “pay back” for “all of yours that has been drunk and eaten in the palace.” Eurymachos offers here an alternative to the climax of general slaughter that Odysseus threatens and that the poem will follow: Odysseus can kill a single suitor (conveniently already dead) who, being labeled as solely responsible for the crimes, can substitute for the rest; Odysseus can dismiss the rest of them unharmed, who will in turn make restitution.⁷⁴ The *Odyssey* does ultimately conclude with elements of this kind of resolution. As a kind of sequel to Odysseus’ opening shot in Book 22, only now among the members of an earlier generation, Laertes, Odysseus’ father, strikes and kills Eupheithes, Antinoös’ father, with a spear at the outset of the battle between Odysseus’ allies and the suitors’ kin (24.520–25). However, this time the battle will be different. Though Athena encouraged Laertes in this attack, she and Zeus bring the fight to a conclusion with this single death. Both factions reach a settlement.

A similar resolution to a demand for *tisis*—material compensation in place of violence—can be glimpsed in the conclusion of the so-called Lay of Ares and Aphrodite (8.266–366). Hephaistos catches his wife, Aphrodite, in bed with Ares and seeks revenge. As has been noted, there are numerous parallels in both diction and structure between Odysseus’ situation on Ithaca and Hephaistos’ in his home.⁷⁵ Despite the many similarities, there is a significant departure in the resolution of their *tisis* narratives. Hephaistos tries several different ways to get his revenge: shaming the lovers before the eyes of the other gods (306–7), having Zeus return his bride-price (318), exacting from Ares a fine (332, 348)—there is even the possibility that he may yet fail and the laughter turn against him: he might find that Ares has fled without paying upon being released (353). In the end, Hephaistos agrees to accept a payment in requital, with Poseidon pledging to cover it should Ares shirk his obligation (354–58). In this way, the conflict appears to end peacefully enough, without bloodshed. Of course, the gods have no blood to shed, and so there are kinds of violence that are impossible among the gods. But nonetheless, the myth of Hephaistos’ revenge presents a possible different path to the resolution of a *tisis* narrative. Once an avenger has captured

73. On the meaning of ἐν μοίῳ, see Fernández-Galiano in Heubeck et al., ad loc., who translates it as “according to his just deserts ordained by destiny.”

74. See Danek ad 22.48–53 and 54–59.

75. On the parallels between the situations, as well as other plots of *tisis* for adultery (attempted or accomplished), see Newton (1987), Olson (1989a), Alden (1997), and (2017) 211–16, de Jong ad 8.266–366, Rinon (2008) 116–18.

the offender in his trap and has him at his mercy, he can accept a payment rather than execute violent retaliation. This is precisely the alternative that Eurymachos offers Odysseus. But at this decisive moment, the narratives diverge. Hephaistos accepts the offer of payment and lets the offenders go. (He does not seem to have much choice in the matter, as he cannot deny Poseidon's offer [8.358]).

In contrast, Odysseus refuses the payment that Eurymachos offers. And Eurymachos' offer is extravagant: the value of 2,140 cattle in bronze and gold.⁷⁶ However, making such a large offer is dangerous. The explicit logic of the restitution, as Eurymachos says, is that the repayment would cover "as much of yours as has been eaten and drunk in the halls." But by offering the value of 20 cattle for each man, Eurymachos admits that the suitors actually performed depredations against Odysseus' household amounting to this great sum. And, in fact, as Egbert Bakker has shown, this sum would actually more than triple Odysseus' former wealth.⁷⁷ Eurymachos' offer therefore exceeds a strictly calculated recompense, ironically undermining his claim to be making an equitable restitution of what they ate and drank. The magnitude of their crimes becomes plain. In spite of this grand offer, or perhaps because of it, Odysseus rejects Eurymachos' plea (22.60–68):

τὸν δ' ἄρ' ὑπόδρα ἰδὼν προσέφη πολύμητις Ὀδυσσεύς·
 "Εὐρύμαχ', οὐδ' εἴ μοι πατρώϊα πάντ' ἀποδοῖτε,
 ὅσσα τε νῦν ὕμῃ ἐστὶ καὶ εἴ ποθεν ἄλλ' ἐπιθίητε,
 οὐδέ κεν ὥς ἔτι χεῖρας ἐμὰς λήξαιμι φόνοιο,
 πρὶν πᾶσαν μνηστήρης ὑπερβασίην ἀποτεῖσαι.
 νῦν ὕμιν παράκειται ἐναντίον ἢ μάχεσθαι
 ἢ φεύγειν, ὅς κεν θάνατον καὶ κῆρας ἀλύξῃ·
 ἀλλὰ τιν' οὐ φεύξεσθαι δίομαι αἰπὺν ὄλεθρον."
 ὥς φάτο, τῶν δ' αὐτοῦ λύτο γούνατα καὶ φίλον ἦτορ.

Then Odysseus of many wiles addressed him, glaring:
"Eurymachos, not even if you should repay me with all your patrimony,
all you now have and if you should add other things from somewhere,
not even so would I still stay my hands from slaughter,
before the suitors suffer revenge for their entire transgression.
Now it lies before you either to fight in the open

76. Eurymachos says each suitor (now numbering 107, after the death of Antinoös) would pay the value of 20 cattle.

77. Bakker (2013) 151 n. 32 calculates Eurymachos' offer at 43 herds. Odysseus had only 12 herds before he left for Troy (see 14.100).

*or to flee, whoever would ward off death and the fates.
But I think that many a one will not escape sheer destruction.”
So he spoke, and their knees and hearts loosened then and there.*

Odysseus implicitly rejects a limited revenge that ends with a single suitor—Antinoös—dead. More starkly, he explicitly rejects any possible offer of restitution. Even if the suitors were to give to Odysseus all they owned and could obtain from the land—that is, all that they possibly could give—still he would not relent. Odysseus not only rejects their offer, but rejects the very concept of material compensation. Even if the suitors were to “give back all their patrimony,” it would not be enough; they must instead “suffer revenge for their entire transgression.” This choice is critical for the meaning of *tisis* and the shape of the plot of the poem. It is a choice that is, on one level, authorial, insofar as the poet has structured the plot of Odysseus’ *tisis* in the bloodiest possible fashion; on another level, the choice is dramatic—that is to say, Odysseus’ choice as a character, as he faces the option of accepting a single death or pursuing the path of general slaughter. The choice to pursue a general slaughter is, of course, foreshadowed and predetermined from the opening scenes of the poem. But this elaborate structure that makes the slaughter seem inevitable is the result of the poet’s decision in advance to portray events this way. Nonetheless, Odysseus’ decision replicates the poet’s own.

So much is the effect of Odysseus’ rejection of Eurymachos’ offer. But why does Odysseus reject it? He does not refute Eurymachos’ claim that Antinoös was the cause of all their crimes, though he well might. This is immaterial to his central grievance that the suitors have been consuming his *βίος*. Eurymachos has admitted that all the suitors are guilty of this crime. (He could not deny what Odysseus has seen go on with his own eyes.) If the suitors’ crimes were only part of a political struggle over the rule of Ithaca, then the death of one of their leaders and a provocateur might have sufficed. But, as it is, they have all participated in the crime of the feast. Still, Odysseus could have accepted recompense for what they ate, but he has chosen to regard the excessive feasting of the suitors as going beyond the mere consumption of food and wine. If their criminal feasts were simply the consumption of his goods, then Odysseus could not claim that no amount of material compensation would “repay” for their “transgression” against his household. But because Odysseus’ household goods are tantamount to his life itself, he seeks capital punishment. But the equation of household goods with life might point in both directions: Eurymachos’ offer, in theory, could have “bought” their own lives back. Certainly Odysseus’ hypothetical, greater version of their offer comes rather close to meaning their livelihood—“all their patrimony.” But when Odysseus rejects this offer, he undermines this equation of goods and life—or, more precisely, he undermines the objectivity of the

equation. Because Odysseus is the one in control of both the language of *tisis* and the physical force undergirding it, he can determine what constitutes a fair exchange. When it comes to the substance of his household, he says it demands the suitors' lives. But the suitors' substance, he says, is not equivalent to their lives. To put it another way, Odysseus embraces an ideology of equivalent and exchangeable value, of fungibility between things and persons, but only as it suits him. Odysseus can take the lives of the suitors to compensate for the loss of his goods; but the suitors cannot exchange their own goods for their lives. Using two different but metrically interchangeable verbs in the final position in their lines, Odysseus is drawing a sharp but subjective distinction between "repayment" (*ἀποδοίτε*) and "suffering vengeance" (*ἀποτεῖσαι*), between a transaction in gold and a transaction in blood.

Here is where the major ideological dimensions of *tisis* as negative reciprocity are especially salient. Eurymachos' plea and Odysseus' rejection recall a similar moment in the *Iliad* (22.254–72), which I analyzed in chapter 1.⁷⁸ Hektor pleads with Achilles, offering a positive reciprocal relationship—an agreement that the winner of their fight "give back" the body of the loser—a relationship Achilles rejects in favor of a negative reciprocity based on "suffering vengeance." The same pattern holds in Odysseus' final encounter with Eurymachos. First, Eurymachos suggests that any need for negative reciprocity has been dealt with by the death of Antinoös, who was responsible for "everything" (*πάντων*, *Od.* 22.48). *πάντων* carries a strong sense of completeness. Because Antinoös was the cause of *all* the crimes, he alone bore the debt that needed to be repaid. "Now" (*νῦν*, 54)—emphasizing the immediacy and finality of the event—his death has perfectly satisfied the need for vengeance. That negative reciprocal transaction is done and is now in the past, Eurymachos argues. Instead, he offers a positive reciprocity. This relationship would extend "in the future" (*ῥῆισθεν*, 55) as the suitors gather wealth that they "will give" (*ἀποδώσομεν*, 58). Note the future tense: Eurymachos' offer operates with the characteristic delayed temporality of positive reciprocity. This giving will extend in time and amount "until" (*εἰς ὅ*, 58) Odysseus is satisfied. By this, Eurymachos means that he himself has determined that his precise offer of the value of 20 cattle per suitor—and no more—will placate Odysseus. Eurymachos is trying to set the value of the exchange. In this offer, Eurymachos does not use the language of *tisis*, but speaks of "giving"—that is, of positive reciprocity. Eurymachos' attempt to change the terms of the confrontation into positive reciprocity is also seen in his injunction to Odysseus, "Spare your people" (*φείδεο λαῶν σῶν*, 54–55). Negative reciprocity is more appropriate outside the

78. Bakker (2013) 152 detects other parallels with *Il.* 9.379–80 and *Il.* 22.349–52 as well.

community. Eurymachos' emphatic *σῶν*, prominently positioned at the beginning of the line, appeals to a sense that vengeance of this sort should not exist within the community.⁷⁹

When Odysseus rejects this offer, he does so by denying that any positive reciprocity could suffice. He picks up and maximizes Eurymachos' suggestion of positive reciprocity—even if the suitors were to “give” (*ἀποδοῖτε*, 61) all they could—and denies its sufficiency. He takes Eurymachos' idea of extending their payment “until” he is satisfied and instead says the suitors will face immediate violence from which he will not relent “until” (*πρίν*, 64) they have “suffered vengeance” (*ἀποτεῖσαι*) in full. Odysseus chooses negative reciprocity—*ἀποτεῖσαι*—over positive—*ἀποδοῖτε*. This is not an objective distinction, but a matter of how transactions are framed. The role of Odysseus—not only as avenger but also as judge of what constitutes a just exchange—comes to the fore. He places emphasis on the need for total satisfaction: the suitors must repay the “entire transgression” (*πᾶσαν . . . ὑπερβασίην*, 64). And it is up to him to decide what constitutes that entirety. Eurymachos had offered one calculation, and Odysseus rejected it. Odysseus has chosen to regard their feasting as equivalent to murder, and only death can atone for death. Also, by rejecting Eurymachos' plea to spare “your own” people and by enacting a violent, negative reciprocity, Odysseus brings vengeance inside his own community.

The actions that then unfold in the rest of Book 22 serve to show the extremity of violence that an offense against the household can demand, when it is treated as murderous. It demonstrates the troubling results that can come from an avenger's manipulation of *tisis*. The poet has used this extreme situation to sharpen certain questions about justice in the poem. These questions get to the heart of the program of the poem.

4.7 *The Program of the Odyssey*

The poem presents one direct, positive program, while also sowing the seeds for its audience to question this presentation. The poem's narrator, its protagonist, and the protagonist's allies all appear to try to fix the meaning of the narrative. They do this even before it begins in earnest, as my analysis in chapter 2

79. Cf. Aias' speech to Achilles in the *Iliad*, in which he tries to get Achilles to follow the example of someone who would accept recompense from someone in his own community who had killed a family member. See Wilson (2010) 104–107.

of the opening scenes of the poem has shown. This program they offer, their authoritative interpretation, appears to be a rather positive picture of the justice of Odysseus and his allies, chiefly Zeus and Athena. Through these characters' words and his own narrating voice, the poet assumes a pro-Odysseus posture. However, though the poet places at the forefront one positive posture, we may glimpse other interpretations of Odysseus. We have already seen some of these more ambivalent interpretations, as when Eurylochos indicts Odysseus for his ἀτασθαλίας (10.437). And some of the language surrounding Odysseus' actions have somewhat darker connotations than is at first appreciated. At such moments, Odysseus' successes may take on a multivalent, ironical character. The poet has constructed an ostensible, pro-Odyssean posture, which undergirds his apparent program. But this positive picture is not justified on the terms that the poem sets for itself.

It is traditional for the beginning of a poem to have particular programmatic significance. The *Odyssey* is an excellent example of this tradition. The very opening of the poem, its famous proem, provides a good window on the program of the work (1.1–10):

Ἄνδρα μοι ἔννεπε, Μοῦσα, πολύτροπον, ὃς μάλα πολλὰ
 πλάγχθη, ἐπεὶ Τροίης ἱερὸν πτολίεθρον ἔπερσε·
 πολλῶν δ' ἀνθρώπων ἴδεν ἄστεα καὶ νόον ἔγνω,
 πολλὰ δ' ὃ γ' ἐν πόντῳ πάθεν ἄλγεα ὃν κατὰ θυμόν,
 ἀρνύμενος ἥν τε ψυχὴν καὶ νόστον ἐταίρων. 5
 ἀλλ' οὐδ' ὧς ἐτάρους ἐρρύσατο, ἰέμενός περ·
 αὐτῶν γὰρ σφετέρῃσιν ἀτασθαλίῃσιν ὄλοντο,
 νήπιοι, οἳ κατὰ βοῦς Ὑπερίονος Ἥελιοιο
 ἦσθιον· αὐτὰρ ὁ τοῖσιν ἀφείλετο νόστιμον ἡμᾶρ.
 τῶν ἀμόθεν γε, θεά, θύγατερ Διός, εἰπὲ καὶ ἡμῖν. 10

*Tell me, Muse, of the man of many turns, who
 was driven far after he sacked the sacred citadel of Troy.
 Many cities of men he saw and learned of their minds.
 Many pains he suffered in his heart upon the sea,
 striving to save his life and the homecoming of his companions. 5
 But even so he could not protect his companions, though he longed to.
 For they perished by their own recklessness—
 fools—who ate the cattle of Hyperion Helios.
 So he took from them the day of their return.
 Of these things, from some point, goddess, daughter of Zeus, speak also to us. 10*

As was recognized already in antiquity, the very first word of the poem has special significance.⁸⁰ It is well known that early Greek epics typically began with a highly significant word: for example, Achilles' *μῆνις*, "wrath," in the first line of the *Iliad*.⁸¹ But it is worth noting that already, from the first moment in the *Odyssey*, the poet is delimiting what the central object of the poem will be and, by omission, what will be made secondary to this subject. Foremost is Odysseus—"the man" (*ἄνδρα*). The poet demands that his auditors pay attention to this character. The events of the epic explain how Odysseus fits within the moral and narrative world after the fall of Troy—a setting made clear by the second line.

To put it another way, the *Odyssey's* proem presents in its first word the single idea from which the entire poem flows. The rest of the poem is, as it were, an apposition to its first term. It is an explication of the meaning of "the man," Odysseus. The poet makes the first word of paramount significance and creates the expectation of elaboration by making it seem at once specific and vague. It refers specifically to *this* one "man" and no other—that is, to the subject of the clauses that follow. At the same time, his identity is vague; though in the poem's performance context there was no uncertainty who he was going to be, he is at first anonymous—only the "man," not "Odysseus." This anonymity is especially pronounced when set against the first lines of other epics, which prominently feature proper names: for example, *Πηληϊάδεω Ἀχιλῆος* in the *Iliad* and *Ἴλιον . . . Δαρδανίην* in the *Little Iliad* (Bernabé fr. 28.1). The *Odyssey's* first word demands further definition that the rest of the poem provides.⁸² Indeed, the proem is the first presentation of the recurring theme of Odysseus' disguised and complex identity. "The man" presents a kind of puzzle for the auditors to solve. Thus, Aristotle calls the *Odyssey* "ethical" (*ἠθική*), with its focus on a character, as opposed to the *Iliad*, which he calls "pathetic" (*παθητικόν*, *Poet.* 1459b14–15), with its focus on the experience of actions and emotions—hence the thematic first words of *ἄνδρα* (a character) versus *μῆνιν* (an emotion that leads to violent action). The audience's evaluation of the poem begins with the character of Odysseus.

The narrator's focus remains on Odysseus for the first six lines. He summarizes Odysseus' life with reference to his wandering (1–2), his sack of Troy (2), his

80. For instance, one scholiast notes a fourfold, programmatic sense to *ἄνδρα*: "by nature" (*φύσει*), "as a husband" (*γῆμαντα*), as "manly" (*ἀνδρεῖον*), and "as an adult" (*ἀνδρὸς ἡλικίαν ἔχοντα*).

81. See, among others, Rüter (1969) 28–34, Goldhill (1991) 1–5, Kahane (1992); see Walsh (1995) 395 n. 48 for examples of other significant first words in Greek poetry.

82. Rüter (1969) 47 notes that instead of naming Odysseus directly, "the *Odyssey* rather replaces the name of Odysseus almost through a 'definition' of the hero." Pucci (1998) 22 observes that this "hints at the *Odyssey's* concern for characterization."

experience with the ways of other men (3), his sufferings on the sea (4), and efforts to save his life and the lives of his companions (5–6). A distinctive feature of these lines is that they present the events that the poet will later portray with Odysseus as the agent of the story. Thus, they privilege his point of view. This focalization is strongly marked. *πλάγχθη* is in the passive voice: the poet describes the wandering from Odysseus' perspective as the one "driven" and not from the gods' perspective, the ones who "drive" him (cf. 1.75). The verbs of seeing and knowing (*ἶδεν* . . . *ἔγνω*, 3) have Odysseus as their subject, and such verbs of perception are one of the primary ways that the poet focalizes his narrative so that he makes the audience perceive the narrative through this character's eyes.⁸³ The poet focuses on Odysseus' pains from the perspective of Odysseus, not from the perspective of those who caused him pain (e.g., Poseidon), nor does he address the pain Odysseus caused others (cf. 23.306–7). He emphasizes the interior focus of this experience with the phrase "in his heart" (1.4).

All of this has the effect of creating from the beginning of the poem a sympathetic perspective on Odysseus through the identification of his perspective on events with the audience's own perspective. To the same end, the poet mentions none of Odysseus' errors and has circumscribed Odysseus' acts of violence to an unelaborated reference to his sack of Troy (antecedent to the wanderings narrative) and the multivalent epithet "of many turns" (*πολύτροπον*, 1). *πολύτροπον* is famously ambiguous: it may refer to either Odysseus' wandering or his mental agility, used for ill or good.⁸⁴ The cunning and more duplicitous aspects of Odysseus' polytropic, multivalent character may have been more prominent in older traditions.⁸⁵ Auditors confronted with *πολύτροπον* might expect these darker traits to be highlighted. But just as soon as the epithet suggests guile and violence, the poet seems to restrict its signification to the more passive meaning of wandering with the immediately following expegetical relative clause. Others have noted the effect of this relative clause as disambiguating the meaning of the epithet,⁸⁶ but I suggest that this restriction on the meaning of the epithet is an aspect of the poet's rhetorical strategy to present a more sanitized view of Odysseus right from the opening of the poem. The poet thus positions his version of Odysseus in contrast to other traditions that highlighted Odysseus' more troubling aspects.

83. See de Jong (1987) 21–40, Bal (1985) 100–18.

84. See Clay (1983) 25–34, esp. 29–30 nn. 44 and 45 for further bibliography.

85. Danek (2002b) esp. 24–25.

86. For instance, Pucci (1998) 25 writes that the relative clause "seems added in order to explain the epithet and to limit the meaning of *polutropos* to its literal sense."

The poet makes no allusion to Odysseus' bloody slaughter of the suitors until a vague statement at line 18 that, once he got to Ithaca, "not even there did he escape toils" (οὐδ' ἐνθα πεφυγμένος ἦεν ἀέθλων)—an allusion so generic that readers have debated whether these "toils" might be Odysseus' pains on Ogygia.⁸⁷ Moreover, the formal similarity between the proems of the *Odyssey* and the *Iliad* presents a contrast between Odysseus and Achilles. As Pietro Pucci puts it, "the proem initiates . . . the apology of Odysseus in contrast to Achilles."⁸⁸ Whereas Achilles is a source of ruin to his own men, bringing "countless . . . pains" (μυρί' . . . ἄλγε', *Il.* 1.2) upon them, Odysseus brings "pains" (ἄλγεα, *Od.* 1.4) upon himself in his attempt to save his own men. Pucci also points out that, in another revision of Cyclic myth, the proem attributes the sack of Troy to Odysseus alone, which "betrays the poet's bias in favor of Odysseus."⁸⁹

To summarize, one important function of the proem is to set the auditors' expectations and condition their responses to the narrative that will follow. The proem has several different means of doing so. It defines as the central object of interest the meaning of the character of Odysseus. Through the extensive use of focalization, it places the audience's primary identification and sympathy with Odysseus. In addition, by referring to only one episode among many in the wanderings in which some of Odysseus' companions died—the one episode, as I showed in chapter 3, in which the companions are most to blame and Odysseus the least—the proem excludes Odysseus from any blame, placing it firmly upon his companions alone. Hence, the poet reveals a pro-Odysseus bias.⁹⁰

The second programmatic passage in the poem—Zeus' opening dialogue with Athena—follows directly upon the first. I have already discussed this scene in detail in chapter 2. Here I merely intend to emphasize certain programmatic aspects of the scene. One strikingly programmatic element of Zeus' speech is his first line (1.32):

“ὦ πόποι, οἶον δὴ νῦν θεοὺς βροτοὶ αἰτιόωνται.”

“Alas, how indeed mortals now blame the gods!”

This general complaint about “mortals” who blame the gods is the first line in the poem directed to an internal addressee. The narrator addresses all prior 31

87. See p. 208 n. 31 later.

88. Pucci (1998) 12; see also Clay (1983) 38.

89. Pucci (1998) 16.

90. Clay (1983) 38, quoting Eustathius, describes the poet of the proem as “Homeros philodysseus”; see also Grethlein (2017) 206.

lines to the poem's external audience and only here adopts the role of an internal speaker addressing an internal audience. Since the programmatic elements of the episode move the external audience to reflect on its larger implications for their understanding of the poet's aims and the poem as a whole, the external audience may feel that here Zeus is also addressing them. The "mortals" who "now blame the gods" are in the poet's external audience. This interpretation becomes more convincing when one recognizes that Zeus' complaint is anaphoric: it assumes and refers to an accusation that mortals have made against the gods. Yet within the opening of the poem there is no such accusation to be found. The reference points outside the immediate text. Mortals made such complaints outside the immediate context but within the experience of both Zeus (notionally) and the poem's audience. Such complaints are found within the extant presentations of early Greek theology, including later passages in the *Odyssey*.⁹¹ The conclusion, then, is that Zeus directs his rebuke not at any specific view in the *Odyssey*, but at a more general view in the wider culture expressed in such external passages. Zeus, thus, is in an argument with the poem's audience, or at least the part of it that subscribes to such views. Zeus and the narrator together present a programmatic argument to both the internal and external audience in defense of divine justice.

In summary, the poet reveals his ethical program at the very outset. He establishes an ethical framework (in the "Oresteia" story) according to which those who suffer do so deservedly and those who, like Orestes, take vengeance upon wrongdoers are accorded just renown. At the same time, the narrator, Zeus, and Athena all show their bias toward Odysseus and, in effect, presuppose before the narrative even begins in earnest that he will turn out to be one of those justly accorded renown. The poet's plan is clear and set. From this point, the

91. Cf. 9.270, 479, 12.378–88, 17.51, 20.169; cf. also Alc. fr. 1.36; Thgn. 337; Sol. fr. 13.25, 75–76. Just as Zeus' apologia in this passage presupposes that there were in circulation such complaints attributing blame to the gods for the evil men suffer, the similar sentiments found in Solon excusing the gods for blame (frs. 4.1–8, 11) indicate a tradition that treats the gods—Zeus especially—as responsible for the woes men suffer. In addition, there are many passages in the *Odyssey* in which a character attributes misfortune to "a god" or Zeus (e.g., 11.436–39). Scholars have tended to see in such sentiments the operation of "Jørgensen's law": characters (unlike the narrator) have limited perception of the narrative and they attribute the causes of events that they cannot know to "a god," a *δαίμων*, or Zeus in a general way, without implying specific knowledge or blame. See Jørgensen (1904). (He applies this principle to all kinds of seemingly divine intervention, for good and ill.) I note, however, that Jørgensen's law can only be effective as a narrative strategy because such utterances are both familiar and intelligible to the audience. Mortals' blaming Zeus is a conventional motif. Some have argued that the *Iliad* presents a very different view of divine justice, in which all evils do in fact originate from the gods. Rüter (1969) 64 thus observes that, in Zeus' speech, the *Odyssey* "corrects . . . ideas that are familiar to the *Iliad*."

ethical drama of the epic unfolds. Will Odysseus turn out to be who he has been promised to be?

4.8 *The Outcome of the Program*

Zeus' complaint about mortals blaming the gods for the troubles they suffer addresses the external audience along with the internal one. Does the poem's audience at last feel that Zeus has been vindicated? In the end, he can only be vindicated if the conclusion of the plot—the companions' deaths, Odysseus' happy return, the suitors' and faithless servants' horrible demise, and the dismissal of the claims that suitors' kin and Poseidon have against Odysseus—comes out to be just. For it is Zeus' (and the poet's) claim that justice does in the end win out; the harms that come upon men are not arbitrary but part of a larger scheme of cosmic justice.

The crux of the issue is the suitors' fate. From their first presentation on Ithaca as "haughty" (ἀγήνορας, 1.106) young men who despoil Odysseus' home, the poet depicts them negatively.⁹² In order for the audience to view Odysseus' slaughter of them favorably, the poet has to construct their guilt meticulously. Their deaths cannot seem arbitrary: Zeus, by the way he told and interpreted the downfall of Aigisthos in his opening speech, has asserted that such sufferings are merited. It is on this point that one of the central tensions of the poem lies. The suitors' guilt is, at once, an artificial, poetic construction and, at the same time, a seemingly organic, integral part of the world within the poem. But how well does this world cohere? In particular, how well is the narrator's case against the suitors built? Is it, as Cedric Whitman sees it, only "a house of cards, carefully piled up to be knocked down, with the appearance of justice, at the appointed time"?⁹³ After thousands of lines preparing the audience for the event, the suitors' slaying unfolds in the goriest and most violently detailed scene in the Homeric corpus, "an orgy of blood vengeance."⁹⁴ The visceral impact of the scene is inescapable and raises the question, is it justified? Is such violence consistent with a just cosmic order?

Earlier in this chapter, I showed that the poem identifies the suitors' crimes chiefly as devastating Odysseus' *oikos* and secondly as wooing his wife (and to a lesser extent as plotting against Telemachos and his rule over Ithaca). The poem

92. See de Jong ad 1.224–29.

93. Whitman (1958) 305.

94. Whitman (1958) 306.

magnifies these crimes by representing them as accomplished murder and adultery. These are the reasons why Odysseus kills the suitors. But why these reasons constitute just grounds for killing them is a further question. Some scholars have made arguments based on the reconstruction of Homeric society, and their points have value.⁹⁵ But I propose instead to look at how the program of the poem itself presents the suitors' deaths as just. I have shown the many ways in which the narrator emphasizes Odysseus' justice and his foes' injustice. But in particular, with regard to the death of the suitors, there is one way beyond all others that the poet uses to make Odysseus seem to come off as just: the narrative pattern of *tisis* and its paradigmatic expression in the "Oresteia" story. This is the answer to the question of justice that the poet proposes with Zeus' opening line; *tisis* is his moral calculus. The hermeneutic that Zeus models screens individual cases. It takes and puts on one side those who do actions similar to Aigisthos. They are morally culpable, and therefore those who kill such criminals are justified. It leaves on the other side those who have acted differently from Aigisthos—like Odysseus, according to Athena in her response to Zeus' opening speech (1.44–62). They are not condemned.

As it happens, Zeus and the others who cite the example of Aigisthos are explicit and concise about what those deeds are that merit destruction. In Zeus' speech, he twice names Aigisthos' crimes in precise terms:

1. He wooed Agamemnon's wife:

γῆμ' ἄλοχον μνηστήν (1.36)
μνάσθαι ἄκοιτιν (1.39)

2. He killed Agamemnon:

τὸν δ' ἔκτανε (1.36)
αὐτὸν κτείνειν (1.39)

In both cases, Zeus names these two crimes together, as if a single unit. In other places, speakers cite Aigisthos' crimes in much the same way. For instance, in three places the same line recurs as a reference to Aigisthos and his crimes. Each time, a preceding line references Orestes' vengeance and ends with the epithet *πατροφονῆα* ("father-slayer") as its last word (filling the last metrical colon in the

95. See, among others, Finley (1954) 127, Adkins (1960a) 53–57, Saïd (1979); similarly, Thalmann (1998) 127–28, 177–79 sees their deaths as justified by the poem's "ideology of exclusivity," which privileges the *oikos* above the larger community.

line after the bucolic diaeresis). This word always signals that the same formulaic line will follow (1.299–300; 3.197–8, 307–8):

... πατροφονῆα,
Αἴγισθον δολόμητιν, ὃ οἱ πατέρα κλυτὸν ἔκτα.
 ... *the father-slayer,*
Aigisthos the guileful, who killed his famous father.

The usage of this line in three different contexts indicates that this is an established way in Homeric diction to refer to Aigisthos, and moreover that Aigisthos is conventionally connected with his murder of Agamemnon. Furthermore, outside of Homer, in the Hesiodic *Catalogue of Women*, Aigisthos is cited, not by name, but by this epithet alone (fr. 23a.27–30 MW). In addition, despite the many fathers slain in Greek myth, this epithet is applied only to Aigisthos in all extant Greek literature.⁹⁶

The point I am emphasizing here is that Aigisthos' crimes are unambiguously two precise actions: the murder of Agamemnon and the seduction of Clytemnestra. The ethical calculation that the poet presents his audience with is that the suitors are *like* Aigisthos. In her programmatic condemnation of Aigisthos, Athena generalized that it is just for anyone "who should do such things" (ὅτις τοιαῦτά γε ῥέζοι, 1.47) to die. But did they do "such things" as Aigisthos did? To put it plainly, did they seduce and commit adultery with the wife of an absent master and kill him?

Somewhat surprisingly, the answer is no. They neither succeed in killing anyone, let alone Odysseus, nor in seducing Penelope. The effect of the suitors' not being in point of fact murderers and adulterers is that they cannot stand justly condemned on the same grounds as Aigisthos. But the entire narrative program turns on this point. The poet offers his audience the standard of the "Oresteia" *paradeigma* by which they are to judge the morality of retributive killing. But *by that very standard* the suitors cannot stand condemned.⁹⁷ To put it more

96. This is true of *πατροφόνευσ*, though the related terms *πατροφόνος* and *πατροφόντης* do appear in a few places in tragedy and in Plato.

97. In a recent analysis of the slaying of the suitors, Grethlein (2017) 214 has also pointed to the problem of poor fit between the example of Aigisthos and the suitors for much the same reason as I. Grethlein agrees that Odysseus' revenge is "boundless," but concludes that, "in the horizon of ancient ethics," it is "an expansive but legitimate retribution" (215). However, the horizon of ethics that matters in the poem is the programmatic model of talionic justice established in the example of Aigisthos, to which the suitors are a striking mismatch. That misalignment holds true despite all the diction of moral condemnation shared between Aigisthos and the suitors that Grethlein *ibid.* 215–18 rightly cites.

starkly, ultimately the poet does not achieve his apparent program of rendering Odysseus and his allies just. I call this his “apparent” program because the poet invites his auditors to question the judgments made about the characters in his poem. As Athena and Zeus debate the meaning and application of the “Oresteia” *paradeigma*, the poet provides his audience an implicit model of ethical interpretation. Therefore, the poet may have a secondary program in mind, one that puts Odysseus in much less favorable light. Some caution is warranted here, and it is perhaps unwise to push a negative interpretation too far. Although Odysseus becomes a villainous figure in some Athenian dramas (e.g., the *Philoktetes*), we do not have much historical evidence of negative responses by archaic auditors of the *Odyssey*. It is possible that some auditors would not make the fine moral distinctions between an assault on the *oikos* and genuine murder that I have been arguing are present in the text and essential to grappling with its meaning. (Such a failure to make these distinctions would be instructive too.) The more modest conclusion I wish to draw is that the poem presents us with a more morally ambiguous Odysseus than we often allow for. The mode of ethical reasoning modeled in the poem supports such an interpretation of Odysseus. In the next chapter, I argue that the text of the poem itself validates an ambivalent interpretation of Odysseus' victory.

4.9 Conclusion

To conclude, let us review how the three principal aspects of the ideology of negative reciprocity are connected with Odysseus' *tisis* against the suitors. First, we see many instances of synchronous temporality. Precipitating offense and reciprocating punishment come together and approach a unity, thus making the return of harm seem to answer more precisely the initial harm. Seers—especially Halitherses and Theoklymenos—perceive Odysseus' vengeance as breaking into the present, before it actually commences. Such perception and the warnings that result are typical of stage two of a *tisis* narrative. It is further striking that the suitors consume Odysseus' stores as if their future reciprocation will be permanently postponed. They live in a kind of perpetual present.

Second, in this *tisis* narrative there is great emphasis upon equivalence of offense and punishment. The poet describes the suitors' feasting in language that makes it tantamount to murder: the suitors eat up Odysseus' very “life” (*βίος*) itself. For this reason, when Odysseus kills the suitors, their deaths replicate this corrupt feasting. Antinoös dies regurgitating the wine he has just drunk—now mixed with his own blood—leaving now defiled the very food that he had been a moment before consuming. This reciprocation is in this way precisely calculated: Odysseus emphasizes the need for the suitors to pay back for the crimes in

full, for “the whole . . . transgression” (πᾶσαν . . . ὑπερβασίν, 22.64). A similar symmetrical punishment can be seen in the way the unfaithful female servants are killed by the characteristic punishment of an adulterous wife—hanging.

However, this calculation of equivalence is fictional, and this brings in the third aspect of negative reciprocity. There must be a judge to determine the value of things exchanged. Is it life for life, life for food, hanging for unapproved sexual relations? But given the political and legal conditions of Odysseus’ world, it is up to the strongest warrior or rhetorician—and Odysseus proves to be both—to set the terms of the exchange. He can do so arbitrarily, counting property as equivalent to life when it suits him, rejecting the equivalence when it does not. He and his allies can narrate and enact his actions against the suitors using the *tisis* narrative and tailoring the narrative as he sees fit, even though other interpretations are possible. And when Odysseus chooses to reject Eurymachos’ offer of material recompense, he follows a pattern we saw earlier in Achilles’ rejection of Hektor’s plea. The agent in control of the narrative can reject his opponent’s suggestion of framing their exchange as positive reciprocity, as an ongoing relationship based on “giving”; instead, he chooses to frame it as a negative reciprocity based on a one-time “taking” of a payment, bringing the exchange to a close. For the suitors, even the less villainous among them, “there is no gratitude afterwards” (οὐκ ἔστι χάρις μετόπισθ’, 22.319), as Leodes says before he dies. Odysseus rejects any positive exchange (χάρις) that extends into the future.

In this chapter, we have seen how Odysseus’ vengeance follows the model of Orestes’. The poet has made one major modification to that model, however: the suitors, unlike Aigisthos, never complete their crimes. On one level, this is unavoidable, since Odysseus has to survive (and so the suitors cannot kill him) and the poet has chosen to have Penelope remain faithful. But this requirement leads to a disjunction: the suitors are condemned as if murderers and adulterers, but have not actually accomplished either crime. Instead, the poet characterizes their wooing and feasting—normally preliminary steps for more serious offenses—as capital crimes. In this way, the poet shows the manipulability of a narrative *tisis*. Furthermore, by allowing these shortcomings in the narrative, the poet undermines his apparent program of justifying Odysseus and the gods supporting him. A second, more ambivalent program is on offer.

We began the chapter by considering the allusion Socrates makes to the opening of Odysseus’ retributive attack upon the suitors and Ion’s description of it as “terrifying.” To feel terror at this moment means to stand in awe of Odysseus’ violence—violence, in Book 22, directed at the suitors. The audience, then, is aligned in feeling with the suitors. Can their perspective be ours? Is Odysseus’ bow pointed also at us?

PART III

The Multiple Meanings of Odysseus' Triumphs

*What can be more soothing, at once to a man's Pride and to
his Conscience, than the conviction that, in taking vengeance
on his enemies for injustice done him, he has simply to do them
justice in return?*

—EDGAR ALLEN POE

IN CHAPTER 4, WE saw how the poet elevated the suitors' criminal feasting to the level of murder, even cannibalism. In return, they faced the reciprocal, symmetrical punishment of becoming victims of their own cannibalistic feast. They are both the banqueters and the sacrificial victims consumed in the feast; the celebrants of a wedding whose consequences turn out to be devastating for them. This reading emphasized the suitors' own agency in their demise, their performing their own punishment upon themselves. At other points, however, the poet emphasizes the activity of another group of characters—Odysseus and his allies—in exacting this gruesome punishment. The *Odyssey* has multiple perspectives on who is responsible for the death of the suitors and unfaithful servants. After Odysseus has killed the suitors, an impromptu assembly of the surviving Ithacans divides in half over the meaning of their deaths. Odysseus does not secure a univocal response to his vengeance.

It is hardly surprising that the suitors have their own partisans who see the slaughter in Odysseus' halls differently. In the social world depicted in the poem, claims among members of an *oikos* supersede claims among members of a *proto-polis*. We might expect a parent to care more for the obligation to avenge a son than to heed a ruler—especially when that ruler is the son's killer. In the very end, those opposing Odysseus are made to conform to his vision of how Ithaca is to be organized politically—but not before their claims have been voiced. The suitors' kin give a different perspective on Odysseus' victory. In their eyes, at least, the programmatic identification of the suitors with Aigisthos is not persuasive. Speaking in their assembly after the slaughter, Halitherses makes this comparison

as explicit as possible (short of naming Aigisthos), citing characteristic actions that condemn both the suitors and Aigisthos (24.458–60):

οἱ μέγα ἔργον ἔρεζον ἀτασθαλίῃσι κακῇσι,
κτῆματα κείροντες καὶ ἀτιμάζοντες ἄκοιτιν
ἀνδρὸς ἀριστῆος· τὸν δ' οὐκέτι φάντο νέεσθαι. 460

*They were doing a great deed with evil recklessness,
wasting the property and dishonoring the wife
of a noble man, whom they thought would no longer return.* 460

Halitherses identifies ἀτασθαλίαι, violence to property, and dishonor to a wife. At the head of this condemnation, he mentions as a kind of summarizing crime the suitors' "great deed" (μέγα ἔργον), a phrase with rich and surprising connotations, as we shall see. Halitherses' unequivocal, condemnatory perspective on the suitors' deaths is not the only one broached in the poem. Odysseus' victory and his enemies' deaths—and even the deaths of his own allies, the companions—turn out to have multiple meanings.

5.1 *A Moment of Silence*

At his greatest moment of triumph, Odysseus demands holy silence. The hero who has more to say about himself than any other Homeric character, who boasts that his fame resounds up to heaven, quiets his most ardent accomplice, the old, faithful nurse Eurykleia, as she is about to shout in joy at his victory over the suitors. Why this uncharacteristic circumspection, this apparent humility? Reaching an answer to this question will take us through several important topics in the critical study of the *Odyssey*. We will find greater nuance to Odysseus' ethics than are usually allowed; certain words and phrases have underappreciated layers of meaning that are brought out by paying attention to other contexts and parallel episodes in which they are used; focalization can be deliberately obscured; several of Odysseus' greatest triumphs turn out to have an ironic cast. The broader conclusion my investigation leads to is that, behind the surface, positive interpretation of his character, Odysseus casts a darker shadow connoting a more sinister evaluation. Odysseus recognizes the possibility of such a negative interpretation when he silences both Eurykleia and the darker, alternative evaluation of his character that her reaction ironically signifies. This conclusion should lead us to revise a prominent view that the *Odyssey* is essentially a univocal text. This study might best be thought of as an experiment in seeing how far we can take the possibility of multiple, countervailing interpretations of Homeric language. If my reading

is even partly persuasive, the *Odyssey* will come to seem more sophisticated and more disturbing than we might have thought.

The moment in question comes after Odysseus has finally accomplished his revenge against the suitors and passed judgment upon the other men (Phemios and Medon) who were in their company. Odysseus has Telemachos summon Eurykleia, whom he will ask to distinguish the loyal female servants from the disloyal. But before he can give her these directions, she is startled by the scene of slaughter she sees upon entering the hall. Immediately, she reacts by trying to shout in joy, only to be silenced and reprimanded by Odysseus (22.407–16):

ἡ δ' ὥς οὖν νέκυάς τε καὶ ἄσπετον εἴσιδεν αἶμα,
 ἴθυσέν ῥ' ὀλολύξαι, ἐπεὶ μέγα εἴσιδεν ἔργον·
 ἀλλ' Ὀδυσσεὺς κατέρυκε καὶ ἔσχεθεν ἱεμένην περ
 καί μιν φωνήσας ἔπεα πτερόεντα προσηύδα·
 410
 “ὣν θυμῷ, γρηῷ, χαῖρε καὶ ἴσχεο μηδ' ὀλόλυζε·
 οὐχ ὅσῃ κταμένοισιν ἐπ' ἀνδράσιν εὐχετάασθαι.
 τοῦσδε δὲ μοῖρ' ἐδάμασσε θεῶν καὶ σχέτλια ἔργα·
 οὗ τινα γὰρ τίεσκον ἐπιχθονίων ἀνθρώπων,
 οὐ κακὸν οὐδὲ μὲν ἐσθλόν, ὅτις σφεας εἰσαφίκοιτο·
 415
 τῷ καὶ ἀτασθαλίῃσιν ἀεικέα πότμον ἐπέσπον.”

*When she then looked upon the dead and the unspeakably great blood,
 then she made to shout in joy, since she saw the great deed.
 But Odysseus restrained and checked her, though she was eager,
 and spoke to her, addressing her in winged words. 410
 “In your heart, old woman, rejoice and hold back and do not shout in joy.
 It is not holy to boast over slain men.
 These men here the fate of the gods and their cruel deeds defeated.
 For they respected none of land-going humans,
 neither low nor noble, whoever came among them. 415
 Therefore, by their own recklessness they have met a shameful lot.”*

Critical opinion is divided over why Odysseus suddenly silences Eurykleia. In addition, his subsequent moralistic speech, which purports to explain his motives, has, far from clarifying the situation, only led critical debate to ramify further. Predictably, analytic critics have condemned and excised various parts of the text.¹ Perhaps the most popular view is that Odysseus is exercising prudent restraint,

1. See Fernández-Galiano in Heubeck et al. ad 22.411–16 for a summary of such views. Seeck (1887) 332 has been influential; he argued that the language and sentiment of line 412 are derivative of Archilochus, a parallel already noted in the scholia.

as when he held back from killing Polyphemos, lest he become trapped in the cave (9.302–5). This line of interpretation usually frames Odysseus' actions as illustrating his moral development and growth in practical wisdom. Critics usually contrast his present restraint with his earlier disastrous boast to Polyphemos.² But, unlike the previous time when Odysseus silenced Eurykleia as she was about to reveal his identity (19.479–90), her present boast poses no danger. The suitors have no divine patron, like Polyphemos' Poseidon. Nor does Odysseus through circumspection and minimization of his own role avoid facing vengeance for their deaths. The suitors' kin will still mobilize a retributive assault against him. In other words, it is far from clear what good Odysseus obtains for his newly learned "piety"—apart from the approval of most modern critics. Is there, to quote one critic who has questioned the prevailing celebratory posture of modern readings of this passage, a "darker meaning" to Odysseus' gesture?³

To answer these questions and explain why Odysseus silences Eurykleia, we need to pay attention to the connotations and implications of the language surrounding this moment. Many of Odysseus' successes turn out to be characterized as deeply ambivalent, bearing a latent, more sinister meaning alongside a dominant, triumphal one. If we pay attention to the intratextual and intertextual connections that some otherwise unremarkable words and phrases have, we will find moments, images, and descriptions that, while not at first glance bearing multiple meanings, seem to convey additional, more negative significance.⁴ The result of this reading is a multivalent Odysseus, a hero both celebrated and condemned.

5.2 *A Multivalent Slaughter*

In the battle with the suitors, there are several other examples of apparently ordinary language that have darker implications. These are less obviously multivalent than the companions' *ἀτασθαλίας* discussed in chapter 3, but if we consider what this language connotes, a number of more negative meanings and ironies are suggested.

2. Segal (1994) 221 emphasizes Odysseus' development: "Odysseus does seem to have learned from his mistake" with this "gesture of moral restraint." On Odysseus' restraint and humanity at this point, see also Rutherford (1986) 160, Friedrich (1991) 28, Loudon (1999) 84, Montiglio (2000) 275. Grethlein (2017) 225 writes that "Odysseus proves his moderation" by silencing Eurykleia.

3. Buchan (2004) 178. See also the equivocal remarks of Crotty (1994) 155–56, Saïd (2011) 214.

4. On this methodology, see pp. 62–68 in chapter 2.

Midway through Book 22, Odysseus' long-delayed, violent revenge upon the suitors is complete. Odysseus and his allies will move on to pass judgment upon and execute the suitors' various helpers, but first the poet concludes this phase of action with a pair of similes—comparing the suitors to heifers agitated by a gadfly and to birds hunted down by eagles—and a simple but brutal final image of a floor running with blood. This image rounds off and summarizes all the preceding bloodshed. However, it has deeper resonances than are at first apparent.

The scene concludes thus (22.307–9):

ὥς ἄρα τοὶ μνηστήρας ἐπεσσύμενοι κατὰ δῶμα
τύπτον ἐπιστροφάδην· τῶν δὲ στόνος ὄρνυτ' αἰκίης
κράτων τυπτομένων, δάπεδον δ' ἅπαν αἵματι θύεν.

*So then, rushing upon the suitors in the hall,
they were striking them left and right. A shameful groan arose
as their heads were struck. The whole floor ran with blood.*

The language of the last two lines resembles two scenes from the *Iliad*. Compare how Diomedes is depicted when, accompanied by Odysseus and aided by Athena, he surprises and slaughters a band of sleeping Thracians (*Il.* 10.483–84):

κτεῖνε δ' ἐπιστροφάδην· τῶν δὲ στόνος ὄρνυτ' αἰκίης
ἄορι θεινομένων, ἐρυθθαίνειτο δ' αἵματι γαῖα.

*He was killing them left and right. A shameful groan arose
as they were smitten by his sword. The ground turned red with blood.*

Compare also how Achilles is depicted killing Trojan warriors he has pursued into the river Xanthos (*Il.* 21.20–21):

τύπτε δ' ἐπιστροφάδην· τῶν δὲ στόνος ὄρνυτ' αἰκίης
ἄορι θεινομένων, ἐρυθθαίνειτο δ' αἵματι ὕδωρ.

*He was striking them left and right. A shameful groan arose
as they were smitten by his sword. The water turned red with blood.*

The parallelisms among these passages have been noted before.⁵ A Greek hero “strikes” (τύπτον/κτεῖνε/τύπτε, τυπτομένων/θεινομένων/θεινομένων) his enemies on both sides in succession (ἐπιστροφάδην); they die (in a genitive

5. Pucci (1987) 127–38, Louden (1999) 35–49, Bakker (2013) 153–54, Alden (2017) 90.

participle), giving out a “shameful groan” (στόνος . . . ἀεικῆς); “blood” (αἵματι) stains the scene. Odysseus, thus, concludes his battle with the suitors like a rampaging Iliadic warrior.⁶ But there is a slight difference in the last half-line that drives home—in a literal sense—the violence of the *Odyssey*. In the *Iliad*, the “ground” (γαῖα) or the “water” (ῥόδωρ) of the river are reddened by the slaughter. The scene of the fight is a battlefield. In the passage from the *Odyssey*, the poet has substituted the term δάπεδον, “floor.” This change of vocabulary reflects the change of scene: Odysseus has brought the battlefield of Troy into his own home. The *Odyssey* has become a poem of domestic violence.⁷

This description of the suitors’ slaughter is later repeated almost verbatim by one of the recently deceased suitors, Amphimedon, in the underworld (*Od.* 24.183–85):

αὐτίκα γὰρ κατὰ δώματ’ ἐπισπόμενοι μένει σφῶ
κτεῖνον ἐπιστροφάδην, τῶν δὲ στόνος ὤρνυτ’ ἀεικῆς
κράτων τυπτομένων, δάπεδον δ’ ἅπαν αἵματι θῆεν. 185

*For suddenly heeding their fury through the halls
they were killing them left and right. A shameful groan arose
as their heads were struck. The whole floor ran with blood.* 185

He is addressing Agamemnon’s shade, and they begin their conversation on friendly terms (114). As Amphimedon tells it, he and the rest of the “ill-fated” (αἰνομόροισιν, 169) suitors came to “an evil end” (κακὸν τέλος, 124), an “evil death” (θάνατον κακόν, 153) at the hands of Odysseus and his allies. This is essentially an *Odyssey* told from the suitors’ point of view, and Amphimedon means the gory description of their deaths to evoke pity. Agamemnon has the opposite response. He celebrates Odysseus’ triumph, in particular by opposing the virtue of Odysseus’ wife, Penelope, to the depravity of his own, Klytaimnestra.⁸ Making matters more complex, Amphimedon describes Penelope’s scheming

6. The whole fight with the suitors is constructed as an Iliadic *aristeia* on a battlefield: see Müller (1966) 136–45.

7. To be clear, δάπεδον need not refer to indoor spaces exclusively: cf. 4.627, where it denotes a leveled, designated space for the athletic games of the suitors. Nonetheless, the important point is that such spaces are built for peaceful activities connected with the city and home, removed from the more natural landscape of Iliadic war. On the change of the scene of killing between the two poems from the wild spaces outside communities to the cultured spaces within communities, see Redfield (1983) 221–22; see Nagler (1990) more generally on the *Odyssey*’s anxieties about violence within the household.

8. See Tsagalis (2008) 30–43.

actions in defeating them in ways that parallel how Agamemnon and Odysseus describe Klytaimnestra's actions against Agamemnon in the first *nekuia*. Just as Klytaimnestra "contrived a trap" with her husband "far off" (δόλον ἤρτυε τηλόθ' ἐόντι, 11.439), so did Penelope "plot a trap" (δόλον . . . μερμήριξε, 24.128; cf. 141) with her husband "long absent" (δὴν οἰχομένοιο, 24.125). As critics have long observed, Amphimedon believes that Penelope recognized Odysseus before the bow contest, contrary to how events appeared to the poem's audience to have transpired. Various explanations have been offered for why Amphimedon does so.⁹ But regardless of the reason, the effect is to make Penelope a witting accomplice and thus more like Klytaimnestra. Agamemnon does not directly dispute this characterization: he does not have any way of knowing that events happened differently than Amphimedon says. But Agamemnon's response reveals an incongruous analogy that Amphimedon does not perceive: the suitors' deaths mirror Agamemnon's own. They both perished during a feast in another's home, through the schemes of a woman. In the first *nekuia*, Agamemnon had remarked to Odysseus on the pitiful scene of his death (11.416–20):

ἦδη μὲν πολέων φόνῳ ἀνδρῶν ἀντεβόλησας,
 μουνὰξ κτεινομένων καὶ ἐνὶ κρατερῇ ὕσμίνῃ·
 ἀλλὰ κε κείνα μάλιστα ἰδὼν ὀλοφύραο θυμῷ,
 ὥς ἀμφὶ κρητῆρα τραπέζας τε πληθούσας
 κείμεθ' ἐνὶ μεγάρῳ, δάπεδον δ' ἅπαν αἵματι θύεν.

420

*Before now you encountered the slaying of many men,
 those killed singly and in strong battle.
 But you would have wailed in your spirit at seeing that,
 how among the mixing-bowls and laden tables
 we lay in the palace. The whole floor ran with blood.*

420

He died amid the accoutrements of a feast, in the blood-stained home of a man who had been his host and became his killer. Agamemnon emphasized the unusual intimacy of the scene by contrasting it with deaths on a battlefield (416–17). In the second *nekuia*, Amphimedon describes his and the suitors' own deaths in much the same way, most importantly with the identical half-line

9. The principal explanations offered are either genetic—an earlier version of the *Odyssey* did have Penelope knowingly help Odysseus—or actorial—it appeared to Amphimedon from his limited perspective that Penelope did collaborate. See Goldhill (1988) 1–8, Alden (2017) 114 n. 89. There is also a minority view that holds that Amphimedon is essentially right and Penelope did recognize Odysseus before Book 23 and aid him: see for example, Harsh (1950) and the recent critical discussion by Alden (2017) 145–46.

that the narrator had used in Book 22 and Agamemnon had used in the first *nekuia*: δάπεδον δ' ἅπαν αἵματι θῦεν. In this form, the clause appears in only these three places. With its domestic-oriented substitution of δάπεδον in place of the Iliadic language of open war, it links the suitors' deaths with Agamemnon's own. This half-line image of a floor running with blood has particular weight in Book 22, where it stands as summary to the narrative of the general slaughter of the suitors. But its resonance with Agamemnon's death suggests an incongruous link—perhaps even an identification—between the suitors and Agamemnon. The clause takes on pathetic connotations from Agamemnon's death and thus has an additional layer of significance, perhaps even an ironic sense of sympathy for the suitors' deaths. Is this link between the suitors and Agamemnon a reason to celebrate Odysseus? Agamemnon seems to think so, but it is unclear how much of the incongruity he detects—whether, that is, he is in on the potential irony. These resonances with his own death in Amphimedon's narrative may have moved him to praise Odysseus and Penelope for achieving the reverse of his fate. But if so, he limits the implications of this ironic identification by opposing Klytaimnestra's evil ways to Penelope's virtue. And his conception of Penelope's virtue is rather sanitized: it consists of her memory of Odysseus (195) and, more vaguely, her “good sense” (ἀγαθαὶ φρένες, 194), but with none of the trickery that she shows in the poem and that Amphimedon had mentioned. Agamemnon leaves that to Klytaimnestra alone (199).¹⁰ Agamemnon's interpretation becomes metapoetic, when he projects it to future audiences as two contrasting “songs”—one “pleasing” (ἀοιδὴν . . . χαρίεσσαν, 197–98), one “hateful” (στρυγερή . . . ἀοιδή, 200)—with the aim of controlling what the “Oresteia” and the *Odyssey* will mean. Agamemnon, thus, either effaces or reverses the ironic likeness between his own murderers and Penelope, Odysseus, and their allies. In either case, he is making a neatly schematized interpretation. But is it the only one that the poem provides? Or might the parallels between them—especially as signaled by this culminating half-line at the close of the suitors' slaughter—have a more ironic and ambivalent meaning?

To return to the occasion that opened this chapter, we find that Eurykleia reacts to the suitors' deaths in a similar way as Agamemnon does here—only, as we shall see, the ambiguities about what she is seeing and reacting to are even more pronounced. But first, it is useful to consider how the poet describes the spectacle that will confront her. Right before summoning Eurykleia, we see the results of the slaughter through Odysseus' eyes (22.383–89):

10. See Katz (1991) 3–6, 194.

τοὺς δὲ ἶδεν μάλα πάντας ἐν αἵματι καὶ κονίησι
 πεπτεῶτας πολλούς, ὥς τ' ἰχθύας, οὓς θ' ἀλίῃς
 κοῖλον ἐς αἰγιαλὸν πολιῆς ἔκτοσθε θαλάσσης 385
 δικτύῳ ἐξέρυσαν πολυωπῶ· οἱ δέ τε πάντες
 κύμαθ' ἄλὸς ποθέοντες ἐπὶ ψαμάθοισι κέχυνται.
 τῶν μὲν τ' ἥελιος φαέθων ἐξείλετο θυμόν·
 ὥς τότε ἄρα μνηστῆρες ἐπ' ἀλλήλοισι κέχυντο.

*He saw every one of them, in blood and dust,
 fallen in great numbers. They were like fish that fishermen
 have drawn onto a hollow beach out from the gray sea 385
 with a meshy net. And all of them,
 longing for the waves of the sea, have been poured out upon the sands.
 And the blazing sun takes their spirit.
 In this way, then, the suitors were heaped on top of one another.*

The central point of comparison is how the suitors and the fish have been “heaped up” (κέχυνται/κέχυντο)—a description intriguingly anticipated in the way Penelope earlier said that she dreamt her geese were “heaped up” (ἐκέχυντο, 19.539) after an eagle killed them in her hall. These geese, the eagle had told her in the dream, represented the suitors. In Book 22, the simile of the fish on the beach could have ended at this point. Penelope’s geese make for an insightful comparison: they are simply dead, lying in a pile with their necks broken. But the simile of the fish continues: they “long for the waves of sea” (κύμαθ' ἄλὸς ποθέοντες) and “the blazing sun takes their spirit” (τῶν μὲν τ' ἥελιος φαέθων ἐξείλετο θυμόν). Set against the figurative image of the geese, the simile of the fish takes on more gruesome implications than are immediately apparent: the fish are not dead yet.¹¹ The last two lines of the simile adjust our sense of what Odysseus sees when he looks about the hall and sees his victims “in blood and dust, fallen in great numbers” (ἐν αἵματι καὶ κονίησι πεπτεῶτας πολλούς). Some are surely dead. But if we take the comparison to the logical conclusion that the simile would imply—a simile whose image of vainly flopping fish left to die slowly might otherwise seem gratuitous—many of the suitors, though mortally wounded, are still alive. They

11. As Eustathius emphasized, inserting the gloss ἐν τῷ ἔτι ζῆν after ποθέοντες. Bakker (2013) 111 draws attention to line 388 to show an analogy between Odysseus and Helios (cf. Whitman [1958] 139 on Achilles and Helios). Alden (2017) 141, 321 notes the verbal correspondence between the simile and dream, but not the contrasting implication of the fishing being still alive. Following de Jong ad 22.381–89, Scott (2009) 115, 231 n. 90 notes that, compared to other fish similes, this simile alone does not show the fish speared or hooked—in other words, as still alive. But, *pace* Scott, the simile does not contrast with the gore of the scene. It emphasizes it.

writhe and gradually expire, spreading further gore in Odysseus' halls. This is the gruesome scene upon which Eurykleia will enter.

Odysseus next asks Telemachos to summon Eurykleia. He is going to ask her to bring in the loyal and disloyal female servants. The latter Telemachos will hang en masse. At this point, Odysseus is somewhat vague: he tells Telemachos he has "a word . . . on my mind" (ἔπος . . . καταθύμιον, 392) for Eurykleia. The rare adjective *καταθύμιος*, however, evokes a sense of foreboding. It appears only in two other places, both in the *Iliad*, modifying *θάνατος* in a negative construction in character-text. When Zeus apostrophizes Hektor as he prepares for his fatal battle with Achilles, he laments for Hektor: "Wretch! Not at all is death on your mind" (ἂ δέιλ' οὐδέ τί τοι θάνατος καταθύμιός ἐστιν, 17.201). In the third case, Odysseus tries to soothe his captive Dolon and get him to speak: "Take heart. Do not at all let death be on your mind" (θάρσει, μηδέ τί τοι θάνατος καταθύμιος ἔστω, 10.383). In both cases, despite the negative construction, the deaths mentioned do come. The third case especially provides a strong and ominous parallel for Odysseus' words in *Odyssey* 22, since in both cases Odysseus is the speaker. Given this background, *καταθύμιον* connotes impending death.

Telemachos leads Eurykleia into the halls and she finds Odysseus. The poet uses a provocative simile to describe the scene (22.401–8):

εὗρεν ἔπειτ' Ὀδυσῆα μετὰ κταμένοισι νέκυσιν
αἵματι καὶ λύθρῳ πεπαλαγμένον ὥς τελέοντα,
ὅς ῥά τε βεβρωκὼς βοὸς ἔρχεται ἀγραύλοιο·
πάν δ' ἄρα οἱ στήθος τε παρήϊά τ' ἀμφοτέρωθεν
αἱματόεντα πέλει, δεινὸς δ' εἰς ὧπα ἰδέσθαι.
ὥς Ὀδυσσεὺς πεπάλακτο πόδας καὶ χεῖρας ὕπερθεν.
ἦ δ' ὥς οὖν νέκυάς τε καὶ ἄσπετον εἴσιδεν αἶμα,
ἴθυσέν ῥ' ὀλολύξαι, ἐπεὶ μέγα εἴσιδεν ἔργον.

405

*Then she found Odysseus among the slain corpses,
spattered with blood and gore like a lion
that comes having fed upon a field-dwelling ox.
All its breast and cheeks on both sides
are bloody. It is fearsome to look upon in the face.
So Odysseus was spattered on his feet and hands above.
When she then looked upon the dead and the unspeakably great blood,
then she made to shout in joy, since she saw the great deed.*

405

A simile comparing a hero to a lion is not, in itself, that remarkable. But here the focus is centered narrowly on the how the lion has "feasted" (βεβρωκὼς) upon

its victims. Note the conspicuous detail of the lion's bloodied "cheeks" (παρήϊά), rather than, for instance, "paws," which would make for a more precise analogy to Odysseus' bloodied hands. With this focus on the lion as a devouring beast, its gore-stained "face" (ὤπα) makes it terrifying (δεινός). In the *Odyssey*, only here and in one other place does a lion simile have feasting upon prey as its focus—tellingly, where Polyphemos eats two of Odysseus' companions (9.292–93), a moment of outright cannibalism. In his vengeance against intruders upon his home, Odysseus has taken on a Cyclopean aspect.¹² As in the case of the simile of heaped-up fish, this lion simile has gruesome implications: it seems as if Odysseus has feasted upon his enemies.

Interpreting this simile becomes more complex once we ask in whose mind it resides. It is sometimes put as a rule that characters are unaware of the similes the Homeric narrator makes.¹³ But in this case, the poet deliberately obscures who perceives this likeness. The passage bears all the supposed hallmarks of embedded focalization: verbs of perception or finding (εὔρεν, ιδέσθαι, εἴσιδεν), a verb of emotion (ὀλολύξαι), and evaluative language (δεινός, μέγα . . . ἔργον).¹⁴ This suggests Eurykleia might be making the comparison. δεινός and ιδέσθαι appear in the simile proper (22.405), seemingly requiring a focalizer, but none is mentioned. Conceivably, we might understand an anonymous viewer of the lion, but the emphasis on "seeing" in 405 and in 407 and 408, where Eurykleia is explicitly the subject, leaves the impression she is seeing the lion. In fact, when shortly after this scene Eurykleia reports this sight to Penelope, she repeats some of the narrator's language, including a shortened version of the lion simile (23.45–48).¹⁵

12. See Bakker (2013) 70–73, Alden (2017) 246–54, esp. 250, Grethlein (2017) 222–25. Note also the shared language of "brains" (ἐγκέφαλος) spilled on the floor by Polyphemos (9.290, 458) and by Odysseus (13.395).

13. de Jong (1987) 125, puts it this way, using her technical terminology: "comparisons and similes produced by the NF₁ reach the Ne₁Fe₁ only, the characters remaining unaware of the fact that they are compared to, say, a lion." She does allow for a few, rare occasions in which a character, instead of the narrator, focalizes a simile. (And in [2001] ad 401–406 she says Eurykleia focalizes this simile.) But focalization is different from knowledge of content. And it is likely true that a character *being compared* is never aware of it; but the more salient question is whether a character focalizing a simile is aware of it. This question is rarely asked. See also Ready (2011) 150–57; (2012) 80: "similes in the narrator-text are meant only for external narratees."

14. See de Jong (1987) 38, 101–48. On μέγα . . . ἔργον as evaluative, see pp. 184–85 later.

15. 45 and 48 match 22.401 and 402 almost verbatim. Some mss. omit 23.48, but see van der Valk (1949) 271. In a recent discussion of this simile, Pache (2016) 13 suggests that the correspondence between these scenes makes it clear that Eurykleia is the focalizer. On the meaning of lions in these similes, she writes: "For Eurykleia, as for Menelaos and Telemachos, the figure of the lion is an instrument of revenge and justice. But for the narrator of the *Odyssey*, the lion is a more complicated figure whose force is by its nature ambiguous" (14).

Nonetheless, the simile proper and the narrative frame have a striking difference in focus—in particular, on the point of who is stained by the blood. (Note the repetition: αἵματόεντα in 405 and αἶμα in 407.) The simile makes it the lion—that is, Odysseus. Eurykleia makes it the dead suitors. The poet has made a subtle and disturbing move. By placing the lion simile immediately before her reaction and suggesting she herself is seeing Odysseus as a lion, he makes Eurykleia seem to rejoice at the depiction of Odysseus as a man-eating beast, while the text only says she delights in the result of his battle: the suitors lying dead and the house standing ready to be reclaimed. The poet is building an implicit, darker ethical evaluation of Odysseus alongside the dominant, positive perspective.

Even as the last two lines describing Eurykleia's reaction seem to distance her celebratory gesture from the more sinister aspects of the foregoing simile, resonances in this language undercut any easy escape from the darker implications of her reaction. The verb δολύζω and its related noun δολοθυγή are rare in Homer, but normally signify a pivotal moment in sacrificial ritual: when the victim is killed and its blood spilled, the female celebrants make this cry.¹⁶ Eurykleia's shout, then, connotes ecstatic joy at (human) sacrifice, particularly given the copious blood (407).

To describe the scene as a μέγα . . . ἔργον is also multivalent and ironic. A superficial reading of the collocation as a "great deed" might seem to valorize Odysseus' actions. But upon closer examination, it has darker connotations. It appears on ten other occasions in the *Odyssey*. In each of these, it represents a negative judgment, usually by someone harmed or disadvantaged by the deed or by someone sympathetic to that perspective. Nestor twice uses it to describe Aigisthos' crimes against Agamemnon as a μέγα ἔργον (3.261, 275); Antinoös uses it to refer to the fact that Telemachos has left on a journey, which he fears is in search of men to fight them (4.663); Eurymachos repeats Antinoös' line when he learns Telemachos has made it back safely (16.346); Odysseus uses it to describe Epikaste's incestuous marriage (11.272) and to describe the companions' feasting on Helios' cattle (12.373); Penelope uses it to rebuke Melantho's conduct with the disguised Odysseus (19.72); the narrator uses it to describe the suitors' becoming armed (22.149), as seen by Odysseus; the final assembly in Book 24 has Eupheithes using it to describe how Odysseus killed the suitors (and the companions?), while Halitherses gives a competing description of the suitors' crimes using the same phrase (24.426, 458). All of these instances are in character-text or are, as in the

16. Burkert (1983) 12; though, the meaning is debated. For further bibliography, see *LfggrE* s.v. Apart from the two uses here (408, 411), it appears three other times in Homer, all explicitly ritual contexts (3.450, 4.767; *Il.* 6.301). The sound of the word δολοθυγή, we may presume, imitates the sound it names.

case of 22.149 (“it seemed to him,” *αὐτῷ φαίνεται*), clearly focalized by a character. Setting aside the case of 22.408, the collocation would seem to signify an act judged to be disastrous.

These distinctly negative connotations for *μέγα ἔργον* are stronger in the *Odyssey* than in other Greek literature.¹⁷ But this meaning appears to be at odds with Eurykleia's celebratory shout. And if anyone is acting as focalizer, it can only be Eurykleia, who “looked upon” (*εἶσιδεν*) the deed. If we interpret this passage informed by the connotations surrounding this language, a pronounced irony emerges. A moment of apparent praise carries overtones of moral censure. It is as if Eurykleia, in the process of celebrating Odysseus' victory, unwittingly also adopts the suitors' perspective. She is about to do something no ally of Odysseus has yet done: delight in an act while admitting its evil. She is about to make the ritual cry of a witness to a sacrifice—in this case, a human sacrifice with connotations of cannibalism.

To bring us to the answer to the question I posed at the beginning of this chapter, Odysseus silences Eurykleia because he is sensitive, perhaps in a way she is not, to the potential more sinister meanings of his triumph. He cloaks his fear of such multiplication of meanings in piety (22.411–16):

ἐν θυμῷ, γρηῦ, χαῖρε καὶ ἴσχεο μῆδ' ὀλόλυζε·
οὐχ ὁσίη κταμένοισιν ἐπ' ἀνδράσιν εὐχετάασθαι.
τούσδε δὲ μοῖρ' ἐδάμασσε θεῶν καὶ σχέτλια ἔργα·
οὗτινα γὰρ τίεσκον ἐπιχθονίων ἀνθρώπων,
οὐ κακὸν οὐδὲ μὲν ἐσθλόν, ὅτις σφεας εἰσαφίκοιτο·
τῷ καὶ ἀτασθαλίῃσιν ἀεικέα πότμον ἐπέσπον. 415

In your heart, old woman, rejoice and hold back and do not shout in joy.

It is not holy to boast over slain men.

These men here the fate of the gods and their cruel deeds defeated.

For they respected none of land-going humans,

neither low nor noble, whoever came among them. 415

Therefore, by their own recklessness they have met a shameful lot.

He does not want his role as a sacrificer of the suitors openly acknowledged. (Note his repetition of the verb *ὀλόλυζω* in 411.) Odysseus safely returns the focus back upon the suitors, using the strong deictic pronoun *τούσδε*. He eliminates

17. See Barker and Christensen (2008) 19–22, although I disagree with their interpretation of 22.408 as unambiguously positive. Hesiod also uses the collocation in this sense when he has Ouranos ridicule the offenses of the Titans (*Theog.* 209–10).

himself from the suitors' deaths. Now it is "fate" (μοῖρα), their own "cruel deeds" (σχέτλια ἔργα), and "recklessness" (ἀτασθαλίῃσιν) that triply determine their downfall. As in the case of Phemios, Odysseus tries to control the interpretation of his triumph and fend off the dangers of irony. (Though, as we shall see, he does not completely succeed.) Perhaps, then, there is a further multivalent implication when the poet describes the blood of the slaughter as "unspeakable" (ἄσπετον, 407). This adjective derives from the verb ἐννέπω (cf. ἐννεπε, "tell," in 1.1), and ultimately from the root *sek^w-. In typical usage, the adjective describes things, like an expanse of sea (5.100–1), which are too large to be put into words.¹⁸ It should be noted, however, that words formed with the suffix -eto- need not refer to "ability" only (cf. παγετός, "frost," from πήγνυμι, "to harden"). It may be pushing a multivalent interpretation further than the evidence allows—certainly, this example lies toward the less secure end on the continuum of connotation—since the adjective seems elsewhere to be restricted to ideas of immensity (though cf. the unusual usage at *Hymn. Hom. Ven.* 237). But given Odysseus' injunction to silence in this passage, this adjective, applied only here to "blood" (αἷμα), might connote not just an *inability* to articulate the scale of the slaughter but an *impermissibility*. On this reading, this blood—the concrete, tangible sign of Odysseus' violence within his own home—cannot, must not be mentioned.

One might object to the interpretation I have offered of the ironies in Book 22 by saying that this book is essentially "Iliadic": in that context, similes of feasting lions and phrases like μέγα ἔργον do not have the negative connotations I have drawn out. There is some truth to this, but this "Iliadic" scene comes at the dramatic climax of a different poem, which along the way has prepared a different set of expectations to this same language. That the simile of the devouring lion comes right after Odysseus has slaughtered the suitors in a feast heightens our attention to its cannibalistic implications. Moreover, every battle scene, every scene of beastly slaughter in the *Iliad* takes place outside the walls of Troy. The inevitable devastation of the households of Troy is kept at a safe distance from the *Iliad* proper, removed to foreshadowing allusions. The *Odyssey* similarly foreshadows a bloody conclusion within a domestic space—only, it also narrates this ending in detail. The *Iliad*'s battlefield intrudes upon the *Odyssey*'s *oikos*. Perhaps the entire "Iliadic" battle with the suitors, placed in the context it is, allows the poem's auditors a different perspective on the same heroic tropes in their Iliadic context. We might say that the *Odyssey* ironizes the *Iliad*.¹⁹

18. DELG s.v.; Bakker (2013) 63–73 uses the same etymology for a different but complementary interpretation.

19. Cf. Danek (2002a) 12: "The *Odyssey* repeats the *Iliad*, yet in a situation which has changed, thereby signifying that the model as well has taken on new meaning."

This sense of Odysseus' fear of the darker meanings of his triumph finds support in another, closely connected passage. Moments before Odysseus checks Eurykleia, the bard Phemios begs Odysseus to spare him. The suitors made him do it, he claims (22.351–53). This exculpating appeal to “necessity” (ἀνάγκη) is unsurprising, since the narrator has twice already mentioned how Phemios sang “by necessity” (ἀνάγκη, 331, 1.154)—though Phemios strengthens the point by implying the suitors used sheer physical force against him (353). More surprising is Phemios' warning to Odysseus (22.345–49):

αὐτῷ τοι μετόπισθ' ἄχος ἔσσεται, εἴ κεν ἀοιδὸν
πέφνης, ὅς τε θεοῖσι καὶ ἀνθρώποισιν ἀείδω.
αὐτοδίδακτος δ' εἰμὶ, θεὸς δέ μοι ἐν φρεσὶν οὔμας
παντοίας ἐνέφυσεν. ἔοικα δέ τοι παραεῖδεν
ὥς τε θεῶ· τῷ μὴ με λιλαίεο δειροτομήσαι.

*There will be grief for you in the future, if you kill a bard—
I who sing for gods and men.
I am self-taught. A god inspired all sorts of lays
in my breast. I am fit to sing beside you,
as to a god. Therefore, do not yearn to slit my throat.*

What sort of “grief” (ἄχος) is meant here? And how is it connected with Phemios' role as a singer of epic poetry? The simplest explanation is that Odysseus would feel “remorse,” as ἄχος often means—in this case, “remorse” at losing the pleasures of listening to song.²⁰ But Phemios has promised more than this; or, more precisely, has promised to sing a certain kind of pleasing song. Charles Segal has shown how, in the *Odyssey*, heroic song brings private grief to those it personally concerns and public joy to everyone else.²¹ In another tradition of poetry, hymnic poetry, the subject and auditor of a song are typically the same—the gods, who delight in hearing their actions recounted and praised in song.²² Phemios is offering to sing something approaching a hymn to Odysseus. When he says he would sing to Odysseus “as to a god” (ὥς τε θεῶ, 349), he aligns his potential patron with the

20. On ἄχος, see Fernández-Galiano in Heubeck et al. ad 21.412, Nagy (1979) 69–117.

21. Segal (1994) 85–109. Note how Alkinoös says “grief” (ἄχος, 8.541) has gripped Odysseus after he heard Demodokos sing of his sacking of Troy.

22. Cf. the closing formula of Homeric hymns with the vocative addressing the god about whom the song was just sung (e.g., *Hymn. Hom. Merc.* 579–80); also Hesiod's hymn to the Muses (*Theog.* 1–115) esp. 36–52, where the Muses sing both about Zeus and to him. That is not to say there is not simultaneously also an audience of mortals for hymns.

first half of the pair of audiences—"the gods" (θεοῖσι, 346)—he mentioned a few lines earlier. Odysseus has the opportunity to have his triumph over the suitors celebrated in song by an eyewitness, who, because he is "self-taught," is particularly able to transform these events into song.²³ Odysseus can influence poetic tradition and shape how his fight with the suitors will be remembered. As we shall see, this is not unlike the way he controls the narrative of his wanderings, making himself the filter through which not only the Phaiakians but also the *Odyssey's* audience know this part of his story.

Nonetheless, this would be an attenuated meaning for ἄχος, amounting to little more than regret. Phemios' threat of ἄχος has an instructive parallel in the embassy to Achilles in Book 9 of the *Iliad*. On that occasion, Odysseus himself is the speaker and he warns Achilles that he will face ἄχος if he refuses to join the fight against Hektor (*Il.* 9.249). Odysseus means that Achilles will lose an opportunity for gaining honor (258, 302–3) and glory (303). But his words encode another, ironic meaning for the poem's audience: a graver ἄχος will come upon Achilles when, because of his continued refusal to fight, Patroklos will fight in his place and die. The analogy between these two moments is strengthened by the identity of the line, up to the bucolic diaeresis, that in both poems refers to the ἄχος to come. These words—"there will be grief for you in the future . . ." (αὐτῶ τοι μετόπισθ' ἄχος ἔσσεται, *Il.* 9.249 = *Od.* 22.345)—appear only at these two places. And, in a striking reversal of the *Iliad's* context, Odysseus becomes the addressee. The parallels of both diction and context, as well as a parallel in the meaning of ἄχος in both cases, verge on an allusion to the *Iliad*. It is as if Phemios is using Odysseus' own words against him. Does this mean Phemios knows the *Iliad*, or a proto-*Iliad*? (After all, he has already sung of the events after the Trojan War: 1.326–27.²⁴) However we are to imagine Phemios' knowledge of the *Iliad's* diction, the poem's audience, nonetheless, would grasp that this phrase carries more serious connotations than just the loss of the pleasure of song.

Perhaps with these words Phemios is alluding to the possibility that another sort of song could be sung about Odysseus' deeds, one that would bring him grief. It has often been said that Phemios escapes, in part, because the poet of the *Odyssey* is lenient toward his fellow singer, whom he depicts as knowing the *Iliad*, or at least quoting it with an unwitting dramatic irony. The line between the inside and outside of the poem becomes blurred. At this moment, Phemios is in a sense standing outside the frame of the poem, as if he knows other poets would not look kindly on killing one of their own. By sparing the singer, Odysseus

23. Dougherty (1991) 98–100.

24. Buchan (2004) 177 reaches a similar conclusion.

shows he is aware that his actions might be interpreted differently. Rather than give future singers reason to blame him and produce songs that would condemn him, he co-opts Phemios in order to control the meaning that the slaughter in his hall will have. A potential alternative interpretation has been foreclosed. Phemios will produce hymns of praise to Odysseus, and future singers will sing heroic songs of his deeds. Because Odysseus chose to heed the warning that Achilles neglected, the potential but unrealized darker song about Odysseus can now only be glimpsed by the shadow cast by Phemios' threat of ἄχος for Odysseus.

5.3 *Losing the Companions*

The darker, multivalent meanings surrounding Odysseus involve not only his defeat of his enemies, but also his successes that come, in part, at the expense of his allies. The example I adduce of such a multivalent success is at the less secure end of the continuum of connotation. As I adumbrated a moment ago, Odysseus is unable to keep alternative interpretations of his defeat of the suitors from being voiced. In the final book of the poem, the relatives of the suitors threaten vengeance against Odysseus. They are led by Eupheithes, the father of the leading suitor, Antinoös. He indicts Odysseus by citing the death of both the companions and the suitors, lumping them together as “Achaians” (24.426–29):

ὦ φίλοι, ἧ μέγα ἔργον ἀνὴρ ὅδε μήσατ' Ἀχαιοῦς.
 τοὺς μὲν σὺν νήεσσιν ἄγων πολέας τε καὶ ἐσθλοὺς
 ὤλεσε μὲν νῆας γλαφυράς, ἀπὸ δ' ὤλεσε λαοὺς,
 τοὺς δ' ἐλθὼν ἔκτεινε Κεφαλλήνων ὄχ' ἀρίστους.

*Friends, this man plotted a great deed against the Achaians.
 Some, many and good ones, he took off with ships.
 He lost the hollow ships; he utterly lost the men.
 Some, by far the best of the Cephallenians, he killed when he came back.*

Eupheithes considers these two groups of men—balanced against each other with τοὺς μὲν and τοὺς δ'—equivalent for the purpose of condemning Odysseus. Might Eupheithes' argument that Odysseus is to blame for “losing” (ὤλεσε) the companions provoke us to reassess the way we interpret the verb (ἀπ)όλλυμι in contexts referring to the death of the companions? The verb has a range of meanings—from passively losing to actively destroying—that rests on an ambiguous sense of agency.²⁵ Eupheithes certainly intends it in the more active sense, if

25. At the passive end, cf. *Od.* 24.93, where Achilles did not “lose his name” (ὄνομ' ὤλεσας) and renown after he died. At the active end, cf. *Il.* 8.498, where Hektor declares his desire to

not quite all the way to “kill”: he does use a more explicitly active verb, ἔκτεινε, to describe how Odysseus dealt with the suitors. But there is just enough ambiguity in ὤλεσε to let Eupheithes implant the idea that Odysseus might have killed them, while not losing his audience with a patently exaggerated claim. And his speech is effective. When he finishes, all the Achaeians are gripped by pity, and soon half of them will launch a retributive attack against Odysseus. After all, none of them knows what happened to all those who left with him and why Odysseus has returned alone. Eupheithes’ speech reveals that this language of “losing” the companions can mean something rather sinister. This darker connotation hovers behind other instances of this language.

Earlier, Polyphemos had prayed to Poseidon that, if Odysseus must survive, then at least let him return home only after “having lost all his companions” (ὀλέσας ἅπο πάντας ἐταίρους, 9.534). Later, this same clause appears when Teiresias and Circe inform him how this would happen—as a result of harming Helios’ cattle. Odysseus is presented with two outcomes upon coming to Thrinakia and encountering the cattle (11.108–14):²⁶

... βοσκομένας δ’ εὖρητε βόας καὶ ἴφια μῆλα
 Ἥελιου, ὃς πάντ’ ἐφορᾷ καὶ πάντ’ ἐπακούει.
 τὰς εἰ μὲν κ’ ἀσινέας ἑάας νόστου τε μέδηναι,
 καὶ κεν ἔτ’ εἰς Ἰθάκην, κακὰ περ πάσχοντες, ἴκοισθε.
 εἰ δέ κε σῖνῃαι, τότε τοι τεκμαίρομ’ ὄλεθρον
 νῆϊ τε καὶ ἐτάροισ’. αὐτὸς δ’ εἰ πέρ κεν ἀλύξῃς,
 ὀψὲ κακῶς νείαι, ὀλέσας ἅπο πάντας ἐταίρους . . .
 . . . [when] you find the grazing cattle and fat sheep
 of Helios, who observes all and hears all.
 If you leave the cattle unharmed and are mindful of your return,
 you would even still reach Ithaca, though suffering evils.
 But if you harm them, then I foresee for you destruction,
 for your ship and companions. But you, even though you may escape,
 will return late and in a poor state, having lost all your companions . . .

defeat the Achaian force: “having destroyed all the Achaians and their ships” (νῆάς τ’ ὀλέσας καὶ πάντας Ἀχαιοὺς); cf. *Od.* 2.330, where a suitor is worried that Telemachos will poison them and “kill us all” (ἡμέας πάντας ὀλέσσει) and 9.40, where Odysseus says he and the companions “killed” the Cicones (ὤλεσα δ’ αὐτούς). Barker (2009) 109 n. 74 also notes the ambiguity in 24.428.

26. 110–14 are identical to 12.137–41, apart from a slight and unimportant difference (in most mss.) in the opening of 12.138.

How active a role for Odysseus are we to understand ὀλέσας in 114 to imply? Teiresias and Circe are not explicit on this point. They mention only “destruction for your ship and companions” resulting from harming Helios’ cattle. There is a curious grammatical detail that has not received much attention and further confounds identifying the agent responsible. The prediction that Odysseus and his companions will “find” cattle on the island is put in the plural (εὕρητε)—as is the possibility that they all might, though suffering, make it home (πάσχοντες, ἴκοισθε; cf. 11.104). But all the other verbs in the passage are in the singular, referring to Odysseus alone. This is slightly odd with σίνηαι (112), which would seem to make Odysseus responsible for harming the cattle. Given the other plural verbs, the immediate context does not account for the verb’s singular number. The poet has chosen to have Teiresias and Circe make Odysseus the sole grammatical subject, even though, when the event transpires, he will not touch the cattle. Similarly, making Odysseus the subject of the active aorist participle ὀλέσας underscores his possible role in the companions’ deaths. The poet could have made the companions the subject of ὀλλυμι in the middle voice, as he does on other occasions when describing their deaths off Thrinakia (1.7, 19.277).²⁷

The phrase ὀλέσας ἄπο πάντας εταίρους appears on one more occasion. Awaking on Ithaca and encountering Athena, Odysseus complains that she did not help him in his wanderings until he reached Scherie (13.316–22). Athena responds that she was not willing to oppose Poseidon but was still confident of his return (13.339–40):

αὐτὰρ ἐγὼ τὸ μὲν οὐ ποτ’ ἀπίστεον, ἀλλ’ ἐνὶ θυμῷ
ἦδε, ὃ νοστήσεις ὀλέσας ἄπο πάντας εταίρους.

I never doubted this, but in my spirit

I knew that you would return after losing all your companions.

Note that she includes losing the companions as part of his return. There is a slight temporal infelicity here, since she says that her reason for not helping is Poseidon’s anger over the blinding of Polyphemos. But this happens after dozens of the companions are already dead at the hands of the Cicones and Polyphemos.

27. The second example is one of Odysseus’ lying tales, but his story sticks rather close to what happened in Book 12. To be clear, making Odysseus the subject of ὀλλυμι does not unequivocally mark Odysseus as the agent responsible: at 9.63, 566, 10.134, Odysseus and his surviving companions “lose” (ὀλέσαντες) a part of their crew. But even on these occasions—the encounters with the Cicones, Cyclops, and Laistrygones—the survivors might bear some responsibility. The essential point is that the active aorist form of ὀλλυμι is ambiguous and thus potentially ironic.

(And Odysseus had mentioned all the wandering since sacking Troy.²⁸) It is as if Odysseus were always fated to lose the companions (note the *ποτ'* in line 339); or, to put it differently, *needed* to lose the companions in order to return. Might, then, these earlier references by Teiresias, Circe, and Athena connote a darker meaning, that Odysseus is ultimately responsible for the lives of the companions, that he, in effect, might kill them? This is perhaps to push the interpretation too far. Odysseus never outright uses violence against them. But it has been argued that the *Odyssey* we have has indications of another kind of Odysseus, a more sinister one, which the poet of our *Odyssey* has revised and pacified.²⁹ Perhaps, from time to time, this darker Odysseus and the ironies of his return and revenge still peek through our poem to disturb our settled views.

28. See Clay (1983) 203–204, though she underappreciates the irony of Athena's words, calling them only "cold comfort."

29. Danek (2002b) esp. 24–25, Bakker (2013) 132–34; see also Russo (1997) on Odysseus as an example of the Jungian trickster archetype. In a similar vein, Christensen (2018) 23 argues that, in the *apologoi*, Odysseus represents himself as "someone whose own actions contribute to his men's failure and enact a justified divine vengeance." Grethlein (2017) 210–13 argues that Odysseus is "at least indirectly responsible" for the deaths of the companions. See also pp. 82–83 n. 11 earlier.

The End of the Odyssey and of Revenge

Revenge is a kind of wild justice; which the more man's nature runs to, the more ought law to weed it out.

—FRANCIS BACON

HOW SHOULD AN epic of retribution end? This question haunts the *Odyssey*. In this chapter, I examine the *Odyssey*'s peculiar ending, which has troubled critics for thousands of years, and make a case for its integrity to the poem. Once Odysseus has completed his journey back to Ithaca, back to the rule of his household, back to intimacy with Penelope, the poem has not yet come to its end. Another book and a half remain. This seemingly supplementary coda to Odysseus' return and revenge actually represents an obligatory extension of the poem's logic—a logic of restless and relentless open-endedness. Because revenge narratives in the *Odyssey* are open-ended, the poem cannot come to the untroubled conclusion in Book 23 that many readers over the years have thought it should. The poem can only end once the gods institute a radical amnesia in the face of a new threat of vengeance that emerges organically out of Odysseus' attack on and victory over the suitors.

6.1 The Telos of the Odyssey

An epic poem should have a proper ending. This was an important point of ancient criticism. Aristotle, in one of the bits of commonsensical wisdom about narrative poetry we find in his *Poetics*, asserts that “plots” (τοὺς μύθους) ought to be constructed around a “single action, whole and complete” (μίαν πρᾶξιν ὅλην καὶ τελείαν), which has “a beginning, a middle, and an end” (ἀρχὴν καὶ μέσα καὶ τέλος). A story, therefore, should have an organic unity, “like a living being” (ὥσπερ ζῶον, 1459a18–21; cf. 1450b23–51a6). A proper “ending” (τελευτή) of a narrative poem has the nature of coming “after something else . . . either by necessity or probability” (μετ’ ἄλλο . . . ἢ ἐξ ἀνάγκης ἢ ὥς ἐπὶ τὸ πολὺ), but “after which comes nothing else” (μετὰ δὲ τοῦτο ἄλλο οὐδέν, 1450b29–30). On this

basis (in a passage I discussed at the end of chapter 3), Aristotle praises Homer. The other epic poets compose their poems without “a single . . . ending” (ἐν . . . τέλος), stringing together events, “one after another” (θάτερον μετὰ θάτερον), which do not lead to a logical conclusion (1459a28–29). But Homer’s mastery at creating a proper ending is evidence that he is “of divine voice” (θεσπέσιος, 1459a30). Even though Aristotle saw the *Odyssey* as an exemplar of a poem whose narrative was excellent for its unity (1451a22–29)—especially because of this telic quality of its plot—the question of where the *Odyssey* ends has long been (and remains) a vexed one. Indeed, if the *Odyssey* that Aristotle knew ended at the same point ours does, his judgment about the *Odyssey*’s unity might seem mistaken.

One of the better-known scholia to the *Odyssey* preserves a judgment of the ancient critics Aristarchus and Aristophanes about the location of the “end” of the poem. At line 23.296, several manuscripts preserve two versions of this comment:

Ἀριστοφάνης δὲ καὶ Ἀρίσταρχος **πέρας** τῆς Ὀδυσσεΐας τοῦτο ποιοῦνται.

Aristophanes and Aristarchus consider this the end of the Odyssey.

τοῦτο **τέλος** τῆς Ὀδυσσεΐας φησὶν Ἀρίσταρχος καὶ Ἀριστοφάνης.

Aristarchus and Aristophanes say this is the end of the Odyssey.

I have translated both *peras* and *telos* as “end”—and note that the second is the same term that Aristotle uses in his discussion of epic plot—but the meaning of these words and the editorial implications of their application to this line are part of a larger controversy about the true end of the *Odyssey*, about whether the so-called Continuation (23.297–24.548) is genuine.¹ Eustathius understood the scholia to mean that Aristophanes and Aristarchus believed the genuine end of the poem was at 23.296, and that all that followed was an interpolated, inauthentic addition—“bastard” (νοθεύοντες) text—added by the hand of a later

1. For a good survey of the controversy, see Heubeck et al., ad loc. and Kullmann (1992) 291–304 (and 291 n. 1 for bibliography), who take the unitarian position. S. West (1989) 113–14 and nn. 1–9 also covers the history of the dispute, taking an analytical position. For the most thoroughgoing defense of the integrity of the final scenes, see Erbse (1972) 166–228; see Page (1955) 101–36 for a classic analytical position. For more recent statements of a unitarian position, see Marks (2008) 62–82, esp. 63–64, M. L. West (2014) 139–42, 294–306, esp. 294. West, although believing the final scenes to be genuine and the work of the same poet who composed the rest of the poem, nonetheless believes them to be inferior. In his view, before the poet of the *Odyssey* (“Q”) gave the poem the final form it has, there was a superior “proto-*Odyssey*,” which concluded around this point. (He prefers after 299.) Grethlein (2017) 245–69 shows how different possible concluding points in the last two books give the poem a different meaning; however, much like West, he considers the reunion of Penelope and Odysseus the “highpoint.”

and lesser poet.² There is no manuscript evidence—beyond the brief scholia cited earlier—to indicate that there was an edition of the poem that ended at (or near) 23.296. In fact, the scholia preserve evidence that Aristarchus athetized portions of the poem after 23.296. Therefore, he must have had at least *an* edition of the poem that continued past 23.296. Moreover, why would Aristarchus athetize any later portion of the poem (and, by implication, authorize the rest) if he had already condemned the entire “Continuation”?

All these considerations have led to different interpretations of the scholia to 23.296. Hartmut Erbse has argued that both *peras* and *telos* do not in this case mean “conclusion”; rather, they are terms of rhetorical criticism meaning the “goal” (*Ziel*) of the plot of the poem.³ On this interpretation, Aristophanes and Aristarchus mean that the *Odyssey* has its “climax” with the reunion of Odysseus and Penelope. More specifically, it culminates with the poet’s discreet statement that their maid, with torch in hand, led them to their bedchamber, where “they then joyfully came to the site of their bed of old” (οἱ μὲν ἔπειτα ἀσπάσιοι λέκτροιο παλαιοῦ θεσμὸν ἵκοντο, 23.295–96). The imagery of marriage is pronounced here,⁴ and the plot of the second half of the poem, with all the uncertainty about Penelope’s remarriage, Odysseus’ victory in the bow contest, and the grotesque, mock marriage feast of the suitors’ deaths, moves toward this *telos*. Furthermore, such a climax is typical of the traditional plot known as “The Returning Husband,” a narrative pattern that would have been familiar to the audience of the *Odyssey*. This pattern may be a source for the story of Odysseus’ return, at least in the sense that the generic folktale is a primitive model for the developed epic version in Homer. In that traditional plot, the narrative not only climaxes with a marriage but it also concludes with it (or the removal of one or more suitors).⁵ With Odysseus’ household back in order, the suitors killed, and

2. Eustathius glosses Aristarchus and Aristophanes thus: “They conclude the *Odyssey* [at this line], considering the following, up to the end of the book, as spurious” (περατοῦσι τὴν Ὀδύσσειαν, τὰ ἐφεξῆς ἕως τέλους τοῦ βιβλίου νοθεύοντες, Eust., p. 308).

3. Erbse (1972) 166–77, esp. 173.

4. The sequence is rather like a wedding procession: see Seaford (1994) 36–37.

5. This folktale type is classified as 974 in the Aarne-Thompson-Uther index. On the *Odyssey*’s use of the pattern, see Edmunds (1993) 23–25, 81–86, Hansen (2002) 201–11, Ready (2014), M. L. West (2014) 15–16. Hansen (2002) 206 finds 15 parallel motifs between the *Odyssey* and the folktale, the final of which is the reunion of husband and wife. I should note that Hansen does take the Laertes episode of Book 24 to be part of the pattern, but it properly belongs to an earlier motif of recognition. In any case, the final settlement with the suitors’ kin is not part of the pattern, and Hansen does not mention it in his summary of the plot of the poem or in his analysis. Foley (1990) 12–15, 359–87, following Lord (1969), makes a similar comparison between the plot of Odysseus’ return and reunion and the plot of the “Return Song” in South

his marriage reaffirmed, all conflict seems resolved and a natural conclusion to the poem is on offer.⁶

The *Odyssey* could have ended here, as the controversy surrounding the “Continuation” attests.⁷ Consider the remarks of some modern critics: for Denys Page, it “rushes spasmodically and deviously to its lame conclusion,” the work of “a minor poet palely loitering in the shadow of the Greek epic tradition”; Stephanie West observes “the pervasive abnormality of this headlong narrative style, so often teetering perilously on the verge of mock-heroic, and the generally admitted deterioration of poetic quality . . . in the last section”; Martin West, even as he accepts its authenticity, nonetheless feels the poet to be “slapdash,” as “the poem totters dizzily to its ending.”⁸ As these statements reveal, the most popular reason for condemning the transmitted end of the poem is aesthetic. And this is an understandable evaluation, insofar as the “Continuation” does frustrate the audience’s (or the critic’s) desire for a simple, clean ending. But the poem we have does not conclude with the marriage bed. It could have followed the typical path of a folktale—the *Telegony*, for instance, is nearer to this genre and ends with a pair of weddings: Telemachos to Circe and Telegonos to Penelope (Procl. *Chrestom.* 329–30)—but our *Odyssey* ends otherwise. Why? What is the effect of and reason for extending the poem?

Before answering these questions, I should add that my argument is not principally about whether the end of the transmitted text of the *Odyssey* is authentic or not; rather, I proceed from the *prima facie* assumption that the ending we have represents the final elements of a coherent poem. In chapter 2, I already demonstrated how the final scenes correspond structurally with the opening scenes of the poem. Other scholars have defended the first three scenes of the “Continuation” (23.298–24.412) and argued for their integrity to the poem on various grounds.⁹ My analysis concerns the very last scene in

Slavic and Balkan epics, which end with the wedding motif. In his earlier work (1965), Lord analyzed the “Return Song” differently, seeing it end with a sequel motif of a further journey by the hero. This analogy, as Lord (1960) 182 notes, has a parallel in Odysseus’ inland journey prophesied by Teiresias. But there is still no parallel for the final conflict and settlement with the kin of suitors.

6. Compare also Aristotle’s summary of the plot of the *Odyssey* (*Poet.* 1455b16–23), which concludes with the deaths of the suitors (after Odysseus is recognized by his allies).

7. Peradotto (1990) 85–86 remarks: “with the dream of desire fulfilled, [is] where the folktale would have ended . . . in the nuptial embrace of Odysseus and Penelope.” It should be noted, however, that because of syntactic difficulties, it almost certainly could not have ended right after 23.296, without other alterations to our text: Erbse (1972) 171, M. L. West (2014) 294 n. 237.

8. Page (1955) 113, 114, S. West (1989) 130, M. L. West (2014) 303, 305.

9. In the Laertes episode, I note that Laertes’ recognition of his son leads him, with some hyperbole, to affirm the existence of the gods: “Father Zeus, truly then you gods are still on

particular and argues for its aesthetic merits as the final statement on *tisis* in the *Odyssey*. However, it is worth restating some of the arguments that have already been made both in favor of and against the authenticity of the final scene, which, useful as they are and each correct in some respects, do not fully account for the significance of the ending.

Alfred Heubeck has made some convincing observations about the structural parallels between the final episode and the opening of the poem.¹⁰ While this may strengthen the case for the final episode's structural coherence with the rest of the poem, it does not address its thematic function. Hartmut Erbse has argued that the final episode is thematically necessary because it ensures that, in answer to Telemachos' prayers, the suitors die "unavenged" (*νήπιοινοι*, 1.380, 2.145).¹¹ However, even if the *Odyssey* did not portray how the suitors' kin failed to get vengeance, the assumption would still have been that there would be no successful retaliation against Odysseus. The poet chose not merely to have the suitors die "unavenged" but to dramatize their kin's failed attempt to get revenge in order to make a larger point about the nature of *tisis* itself. Lastly, Richard Seaford has argued that the "Continuation," and the final scene in particular, is a 6th-century addition, on the grounds that its concern with the public, political sphere suits that period better than a putative 7th- or 8th-century date of composition for the rest of the poem.¹² For Seaford, once the city-state and its institutions grew in importance during the 6th century, the question of a political settlement in addition to private vengeance could not be avoided. In my view, Seaford is partly right: an ending at 23.297, with its imagery of wedding ritual, would have provided one kind of conclusion to the poem—an idealized, conclusive ending. But whereas Seaford implies that *tisis* is only a problem in the context of the public sphere,

tall Olympus, if indeed the suitors paid for their reckless violence" (*Ζεῦ πάτερ, ἦ ῥ' ἔτι ἐστὲ θεοὶ κατὰ μακρὸν Ὀλυμπον, εἰ ἔτεόν μνηστῆρες ἀτάσθαλον ὕβριν ἔτεισαν*, 24.351–52). Retribution vindicates the justice of the cosmos. Dimock (1989) 330 calls this a response to the questions posed about divine justice at 19.363–69 and 20.201–3. I would add that it responds to many other questions about divine justice, even from the outset of the poem. Laertes' words here have the effect of programmatically connecting the successful outcome of Odysseus' *tisis* plot with proof of the gods' justice. In the second *nekuia*, strong arguments have been made for the effectiveness of the final comparison that Agamemnon there draws between the "Oresteia" and the *Odyssey*: see Hölscher (1967) 11–12, Tsagalis (2008) 30–43.

10. The assembly at 24.413–71 is parallel to the assembly at 2.1–259; the divine council of 24.472–88 is parallel to the one at 1.26–95; see Heubeck (1954) 36–40 and Heubeck et al., ad 24.413; see also Hölscher (1967) 12, Olson (1995) 24; see pp. 4, 54 earlier and pp. 213, 217–18 later.

11. Erbse (1972) 113–42, esp. 138–42; see also Wender (1978) 65.

12. Seaford (1994) 38–42; see also S. West (1989) 133–34.

our *Odyssey* has already shown that even in private, familial affairs the issue of *tisis* is not resolved so simply and conclusively. The poem's auditors have already heard how Odysseus' vengeance against Polyphemos resulted in Odysseus' persecution by Polyphemos' father, Poseidon. Furthermore, the suitors' relatives explicitly invoke kinship in their pursuit of revenge (24.434). Our *Odyssey*, rather than concluding with a wedding, continues and thereby defies any expectation its audience, as well as its characters, might have of a neat conclusion.

6.2 *A Tendentious "Oresteia"*

Our *Odyssey* rejects conclusiveness, and this is precisely the reason why it continues beyond the *telos* of the marriage bed. By doing so, the poem's structure belies the claims of the poem's narrator and the other speakers within the poem that retribution (*tisis*) provides conclusive and final justice. The paradigmatic example of retribution that Zeus offers in the beginning of the poem—Orestes' vengeance upon Aigisthos—has a markedly conclusive ending. Zeus ends his brief narration of this example with a half-line summary: "Now he [Aigisthos] has paid for everything all together" (*νῦν δ' ἀθρόα πάντ' ἀπέτεισεν*, 1.43). Quite literally, Aigisthos' act of requital, his "paying back," is the last word in the narrative. Zeus emphasizes the comprehensive finality of this repayment with two terms: *ἀθρόα πάντ'*. The return to a proper state of affairs secured by Aigisthos' death is the conclusion of the narrative. This initial case is the most prominent instance of a general rule: when a character tells the "Oresteia" narrative, he does not continue on after Aigisthos' death.¹³

There is no reason why the poet had to have all the characters conclude their tellings of the "Oresteia" story this way, but it does serve a purpose. Putting the emphasis on the finality of Aigisthos' death excludes the more troubling aspects of Klytaimnestra's death. Our *Odyssey* is laconic about her demise.¹⁴ In every version of Orestes' revenge told in the *Odyssey*, the only one whom Orestes is explicitly said to kill is Aigisthos. The only reference to Klytaimnestra's death is in Nestor's version of the events that occur after Orestes kills Aigisthos (3.309–10):

13. There is a partial exception when Nestor includes the funeral feast for Aigisthos and Klytaimnestra and the arrival of Menelaos. These events, however, do not imply further action to come and, more to the point, their inclusion is motivated by Nestor's goal of telling Menelaos' *nostos*, not Orestes' revenge. Nestor wants to encourage Telemachos not to arrive back home too late, as Menelaos did to his misfortune (3.313–16).

14. See the scholia to 1.299 and 3.309–10, which give conflicting views on whether Homer thought Orestes killed Klytaimnestra. Aristarchus, for instance, believed it was "unclear" (*ἄδηλον*) what Homer thought.

ἦ τοι ὁ τὸν κτείνας δαίνυ τάφον Ἀργείοισιν
μητρὸς τε στυγερῆς καὶ ἀνάλκιδος Αἰγίσθοιο·

*Truly he, having killed him, was making a funeral feast for the Argives
for his hateful mother and the cowardly Aigisthos.*

Note how the object of the participle “having killed” (κτείνας) is only Aigisthos, while the funeral is for them both, joined equally by τε . . . καί. In this oblique way, we do learn that Klytaimnestra died when Orestes returned and killed Aigisthos. The manner of her death, however, is left deliberately opaque. In later traditions—Aeschylus’ *Oresteia* most prominently—Orestes kills her along with Aigisthos. There is no *explicit* statement of this in the *Odyssey*, though it is likely implied at 3.309–10. There are various possible explanations for this silence. The two characters who narrate in detail the vengeance of Orestes (Nestor and Menelaos) may not be interested in drawing attention to the unsavory aspects of Orestes’ relationship with his mother. Nestor is reticent here because one of the functions of his speech is to compare Klytaimnestra with Penelope and thus warn Telemachos not to stay long from home, lest a suitor corrupt his mother without his protective influence. Nestor would thus be hesitant to confront too directly the matricidal aspects of Orestes’ character for fear of offending Telemachos.¹⁵ In addition, the somewhat odd procedure here of Orestes’ conducting a funeral rite for the murderers of his father—whom he has just killed, no less—emphasizes the oddness of Nestor’s oblique reference. Agamemnon, on the other hand, hardly seems reluctant to draw out the more villainous aspects of Klytaimnestra’s character: when he recounts his own murder (twice), he focuses on the evilness of Klytaimnestra, which eclipses Aigisthos’ in Agamemnon’s eyes (11.421–34; 24.199–202). In the first *nekuia*, Agamemnon cannot refer to Klytaimnestra’s death, because, from the standpoint of the internal chronology of the poem, she is still alive. But at the time of the second *nekuia*, unlike the first, Orestes has achieved his vengeance and Klytaimnestra is dead. Agamemnon could have learned of the events from some other recently deceased person, just as he heard of Odysseus’ vengeance from the deceased suitors. Achilles even broaches the topic of Orestes’ κλέος (24.32–34), but not in terms of the κλέος Orestes obtained for himself, only in terms of the κλέος Agamemnon could have won for him. The poem’s silence about Klytaimnestra’s death is striking.¹⁶

15. See Scodel (2002) 14, Thalmann (1998) 209, 303, Alden (2017) 84.

16. West ad loc. in Heubeck et al. suggests Klytaimnestra may have committed suicide, but there is no evidence for this, either in Homer or in any other ancient source. M. L. West (2013) 283 concludes that, in the *Nostoi*, it is likely Orestes killed her, and “we know of no alternative

There is extra-Homeric evidence that mythic tradition, from an early stage, portrayed Orestes as a matricide. A papyrus fragment attributed to the Hesiodic *Catalogue of Women* includes the earliest known statement that Orestes killed Klytaimnestra (fr. 23a.27–30 MW, supplements from Merkelbach and West):

λοῖσθον δ' ἐν μεγάροισι Κλυτ]αιμήστρη κυα[νῶπις
γείναθ' ὑποδμηθ[εῖς Ἀγαμέμν]ον[ι δῖ]ον Ὀρέ[στην,
ὅς ῥα καὶ ἡβήσας ἀπε[τείσατο π]ατροφο[ν]ῆα,
κτεῖνε δὲ μητέρα [ἦν ὑπερήν]ορα νηλεί [χαλκῶι. 30

*Last in the halls, dark-eyed Klytaimnestra,
subdued under Agamemnon, bore divine Orestes,
who then, coming of age, took vengeance on the father-slayer.
He killed his arrogant mother with pitiless bronze. 30*

While there is some doubt about how to supplement some of the lacunae here (especially the epithet for Klytaimnestra in line 30), there is little doubt that the fragment depicts Orestes as killing his mother Klytaimnestra. The preceding context and the fragments of names make it clear who is involved, and the first half of line 30 is unambiguous: “he killed his mother” (κτεῖνε δὲ μητέρα). Furthermore, these lines show some affinities between the way they describe how Orestes killed Klytaimnestra and the way the *Odyssey* describes how he killed Aigisthos: ἡβήσας (cf. ἡβήσῃ, *Od.* 1.41); κτεῖνε (cf. *Od.* ἔκταν', 1.30); most interestingly, π]ατροφο[ν]ῆα, which otherwise appears in our extant texts in only three places in the same formulaic context in the *Odyssey*, always applied to Aigisthos: “. . . he killed/took vengeance upon the father-slayer, guileful Aigisthos, because he killed his famous father” (. . . ἔκτανε/ἐτείσατο πατροφονῆα, Αἴγισθον δολόμητιν, ὃ οἱ πατέρα κλυτὸν ἔκτα, 1.299–300, 3.197–98, 307–8). Despite this allusion to Aigisthos, he remains unnamed and the emphasis is on Klytaimnestra. By reusing this same language, the Hesiodic *Catalogue* might be thought of as correcting the *Odyssey*'s oversight.¹⁷

Proclus' summary of the *Nostoi* mentions Orestes' “vengeance” (τιμωρία, 302) upon Klytaimnestra and Aigisthos, which, though not explicit, can only mean he killed them. Stesichorus' *Oresteia* probably included Orestes' matricide,

version in which Orestes did not kill her.” He traces the theory of Klytaimnestra's suicide back to Robert (1881) 162–63, who considers the “flippancy” (*frivoler*) way her death is mentioned as evidence against Orestes' having performed the morally complex act of matricide.

17. Similarly, S. West in Heubeck et al. ad 1.299 suggests Aeschylus applies the adjective πατροκτονοῦσα to Klytaimnestra with *Od.* 1.299 in mind.

since one fragment of commentary found in a papyrus says that Euripides got from Stesichorus the idea to include a gift of a bow “to defend against the goddesses [i.e., the Furies]” (ἐξ αὐτ[ὸν] θαι [θ]εάς, *PMG* 217.20–21). Given the later mythic traditions represented by Aeschylus’ *Oresteia* and Euripides’ *Orestes*, the only reasonable explanation for why the Furies’ would persecute Orestes is that he killed Klytaimnestra. Pindar’s version of the myth includes Orestes’ matricide—“He slew his mother” (πέφνευ τε ματέρα, *Pyth.* 11.37)—though he makes no mention of the Furies. Perhaps, like Nestor, he does not want to draw attention to the more unsavory aspects of the exemplum and have these traits characterize his addressee.

The evidence from archaic art, though sometimes fragmentary and disputed, indicates that the most popular version of the myth in circulation had Orestes kill his mother along with Aigisthos. Many scholars think that artists (at least before Aeschylus) tended to emphasize Aigisthos’ role over Klytaimnestra’s, both as murderer and as victim.¹⁸ But even the early depictions of Orestes’ revenge usually included Klytaimnestra alongside Aigisthos, if sometimes making her secondary to her paramour. The most important early piece of evidence is a krater from the mid-7th century, sometimes called “The Aegisthus Vase” (formerly Berlin A32). It is usually interpreted as showing Orestes, with sword drawn, prodding both victims to their deaths.¹⁹ Also from the 7th century, a bronze mitra (a piece of armor protecting the lower torso) from Olympia has a young man, usually thought to be Orestes, perhaps drawing a sword, approaching a veiled woman on a throne, usually thought to be Klytaimnestra (Olympia B4900).²⁰ Even more striking is a bronze strip from the 6th century that once adorned a tripod leg (Olympia M77). It consists of three panels arranged vertically. The middle panel depicts a man having pierced a woman clean through with a large sword, the end of which points threateningly toward a second victim who is fleeing toward a stepped structure. Another woman looks on approvingly. This is usually interpreted as Orestes killing Klytaimnestra, while Elektra encourages him and Aigisthos flees (perhaps to an altar).²¹ A final item from the 6th century may be relevant: a metope from the older Heraion at Foce del Sele depicts a man with

18. See e.g. Shapiro (1994) 125–27.

19. Vermeule (1966) 13, Gantz (1993) 677; Davies (1969) 253 argues for the death of Agamemnon instead. Prag (1985) 8 further suggests that some unusual creatures under the handles are an allusion to the Erinyes.

20. Fittschen (1969) 187–88, 191, Gantz (1993) 677–78; Gantz, following Hoffmann, thinks a depiction of Menelaos and Helen is possible.

21. Fittschen (1969) 191, Gantz (1993) 678; Prag (1985) 35–36 is doubtful.

a sword fighting off a snake coiled around him. The interpretation of this depiction is more controversial than the other three, but it is usually understood to be Orestes fighting off an Erinyes.²² This identification is supported by the presence of two other metopes on the temple: one depicting Klytaimnestra with her axe, restrained by Kassandra, and one depicting Orestes stabbing Aigisthos, in a scene similar to the aforementioned bronze strip. In a study of archaic Cretan material, Mark Davies argues that the dominant version of the “Oresteia” myth (at least on Crete) had Klytaimnestra as the more important and active villain. Against this background, he argues, the Homeric version stands out as innovative.²³ This might overstate the evidence, but even a more moderate conclusion that artistic depictions of the myth did not hesitate to show Orestes as a matricide contrasts with the reticence shown in the *Odyssey*.²⁴

All this means that the *Odyssey*’s conclusive and neatly demarcated “Oresteia” is tendentious.²⁵ The poet is creating an Orestes untroubled by the morally fraught issue of matricide, against a more general mythic background in which this darker aspect of his character is always at least tacitly present. The poet of the *Odyssey* presents what is on its face a simple and conclusive model of vengeance, patterned after a sanitized version of Orestes’ myth. This selective rendition of Orestes’ vengeance calls attention to itself: it seems unlikely that the absence of matricide, so widely attested elsewhere, would have escaped notice. Both Athena and Nestor make plain at different points in the poem that they assume the story of Orestes’ vengeance is widely known and that Telemachos can interpret it as an ethical model for his own situation. Athena, in encouraging Telemachos to contemplate killing the suitors, uses a rhetorical question that relies on Orestes

22. Zancani Montuoro and Zanotti-Bianco (1954) 289–300, Vermeule (1966) 14, Prag (1985) 44; Gantz (1993) 679 is doubtful.

23. Davies (1969) 224–40.

24. For an overview of the artistic evidence for the “Oresteia” myth, see Prag (1985). Prag, however, takes a generally skeptical view on attributing scenes to the “Oresteia” myth. He even denies that early art depicted her murder at all (35). This view is an outlier among scholarly opinions, and Prag does allow that some depictions, such as “The Aegisthus Vase,” represent a moment before or after the matricide.

25. It may further be added that, in addition to these deliberately elided details about the conclusion of Orestes’ vengeance, the poem is equally silent about the antecedent events to Aigisthos’ seduction and murder that might have complicated this simple narrative. Other mythic traditions present Aigisthos as an avenging figure himself, either for Atreus’ murder of Thyestes’ other children (see Hyg. *Fab.* 87; Apollod. *Epit.* 6.9) or for the murder of Nauplios’ son Palamedes (Apollod. *Epit.* 6.9). There is perhaps a faint echo of Aigisthos’ retributive motivations in the poem in the apparent thank-offering he makes after killing Agamemnon (3.273–75; cf. 12.345–47). See also p. 87 n. 17.

already being famous throughout Greece: “Have you not heard what glory noble Orestes obtained among all men . . . ?” (ἦ οὐκ αἶεὶς οἶον κλέος ἔλλαβε δῖος Ὀρέστης πάντας ἐπ’ ἀνθρώπους, 1.298–99; cf. 3.193). The evidence in archaic art and other archaic literature shows that the *Odyssey*’s audience would also have been familiar with this myth and been able to make the sorts of analogies that Nestor and Athena think Telemachos should make. Given this background, the poet is creating a superficially laudatory model of heroic vengeance, while expecting his auditors to grasp its unspoken flaws. This model of vengeance thus subtly undermines itself.

But even more importantly, as the poem proceeds, this apparently neat and conclusive model of vengeance will compete with other, more obviously problematic models of vengeance. In this way, the poet is undermining the model of an epic culminating in conclusive vengeance, first subtly, but in the final scenes, quite dramatically. When any one narrative of vengeance is considered in isolation, it stands as a sure and uncontested interpretation of events. But when viewed in the context of other narratives, its finality and conclusiveness becomes fraught. While, on the surface, all the examples of vengeance appear conclusive, in view of their wider context, they simultaneously threaten open-endedness.²⁶

6.3 *The Open-endedness of the Odyssey*

Narratives of vengeance in the *Odyssey* fail to reach a stable *telos* in two main ways: either they bring about further narratives of vengeance that, in lieu of a satisfactory ending to the first narrative, interpose their own narrative logic; or, they leave significant questions or tensions unresolved.

With open-ended *tisis* narratives of the first kind, a narrative can ramify, implicating further narratives that are interposed within an earlier narrative in a kind of hypotactic narrative syntax. In principle, these further subordinate narratives could be added indefinitely. This has the effect of frustrating agents’ attempts to narrate and enact their vengeance apart from competing interpretations. For example, the *tisis* that Zeus exacts upon Odysseus’

26. I use “open-endedness” in the somewhat-technical sense that Bakhtin does for the tendency of certain kinds of literature—works characterized by dialogic discourse—to avoid an Aristotelian *telos* that gives the final meaning to a narrative: see Bakhtin (1981) 3–40, esp. 7, 16. It should be noted, however, that Bakhtin denied that epic was dialogic; other scholars, however, have challenged this view with respect to Homer: Peradotto (1990) 53–58, 63 and (2002), Scodel (2002) 15–16, Kahane (2005). In my view, it is best to consider monologic and dialogic discourse as tendencies in tension in the poem. For a complementary perspective on how to end of the *Odyssey* deals with the psychological desire to find a conclusive ending and, thus, meaning to a narrative, see Christensen (2019).

companions, ostensibly for their impious feasting upon the cattle of Helios, has causes and consequences that extend well beyond its narrowly targeted and narrated bounds. Abstracted from its context, Zeus’ retribution upon Odysseus’ companions could be viewed as a simple cause-and-effect relationship between two events: see figure 6.1. (In the model presented earlier in chapter 2, these two events are the “precipitating offense” [4] and the “retributive act” [6].)



FIG. 6.1 Zeus’ Retribution, Abstracted

But as just one of several other narrative threads all wound together in the fabric of the epic, these two events could be viewed as part of a much longer sequence that embraces the whole of the poem’s action. The chain begins with the events that explain why Odysseus is marooned at the opening of the poem and ends with the final scene of the attempted vengeance of the suitors’ kin (see figure 6.2):

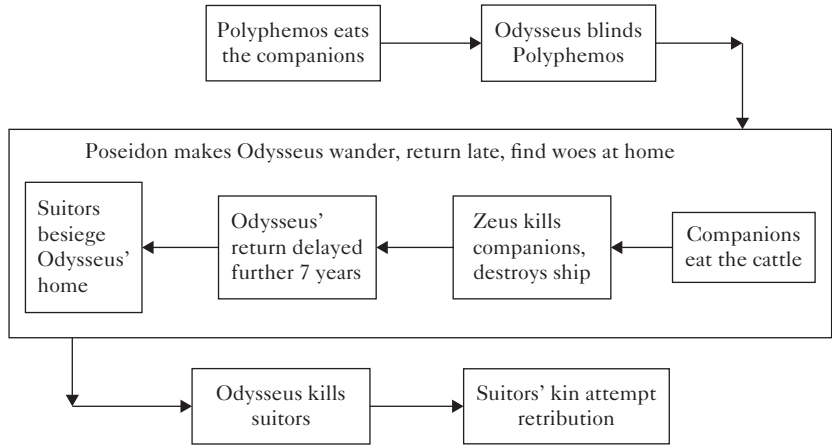


FIG. 6.2 Zeus’ Retribution in Context

Because Polyphemos eats six of Odysseus’ companions, Odysseus avenges them by blinding Polyphemos. Poseidon then avenges Polyphemos by causing Odysseus to wander, come home late, lose all his companions, and find troubles in his home, thus fulfilling the Cyclops’ prayer (9.534–35). This vengeance, however, works itself out through the companions’ slaughter of the cattle and their subsequent retributive punishment. Note that Teiresias, in the course of explaining why Odysseus and his companions are wandering and while predicting the course

of their future, repeats, essentially verbatim, these final two lines of Polyphemos' prayer that identified Odysseus' punishment (9.534–35, 11.114–15). In the Cyclops' mouth, these two lines describe a fate that will come about because Odysseus blinded him; in Teiresias', it will occur if the companions eat the cattle. Thus, as illustrated earlier, Poseidon's vengeance contains within it further narratives of vengeance. For when Zeus destroys Odysseus' one remaining ship and final group of companions in compensation for the death of the cattle, Odysseus loses his means of getting home.²⁷ As a result, he is kept from home for seven more years. And since the suitors' siege upon his household begins only three years before his eventual return (13.377), he would have avoided his *tisis* narrative entirely, had Zeus not earlier taken vengeance on the companions. The poet might have arranged events differently, having the suitors' siege begin earlier, for instance. Indeed, it is somewhat peculiar that the suitors insinuated themselves in Odysseus' home only after a full six years have passed since the fall of Troy without any word of Odysseus.²⁸ But as it is, the errors of the protagonists—Odysseus' blinding Polyphemos and the companions' eating Helios' cattle—allow Odysseus to become the hero of his own, greatest *tisis* narrative. And, as we will explore in more detail later, Odysseus' *tisis* implicates yet another *tisis* narrative.

This entanglement of the narrative of Zeus' *tisis* against the companions with other *tisis* narratives has the effect of undermining the claim that Zeus makes in the opening of the poem that he observes the strict justice of desert. Perhaps Athena knows this when she complains that Odysseus suffers unjustly on Ogygia (1.48–59). Considering the fact that Zeus is at least partly responsible for landing Odysseus on that island, Athena's accusation that Zeus "hated him [Odysseus] so much" (τόσον ὠδύσαο, 62) is not as hyperbolic as it may at first seem. Zeus' defense against her accusation is highly selective: Helios' cattle and his own response go unmentioned and Odysseus' fate is all Poseidon's doing, who is relentlessly vindictive anyway (68–69). Even after he returns to Ithaca, Odysseus personally faces the consequences of Zeus' act: without the support of his companions, who could have offered military aid, he has to plot a duplicitous and risky strategy to regain his household; even after he defeats the suitors, angry foes bring up the fact that Odysseus lost all his companions as grounds for their own act of *tisis* (24.428).

27. In the lying tale Odysseus tells Eumaios, the presence of "companions that stand ready, who will send him to his homeland" (ἐπαρτέας ἔμμεν ἑταίρους, οἳ δὴ μιν πέμψουσι φίλην ἔς πατρίδα γαῖαν, 14.332–33) is the final necessary condition for his (supposed) return. Cf. also 4.558–59, where Proteus tells Menelaos that Odysseus cannot make it home from Ogygia precisely because he has no companions (in addition to being detained there by Calypso).

28. As S. West in Heubeck et al. ad 2.89 notes.

Odysseus' encounter with Polyphemos provides a clear example of how competing interpretations of events prevent a neat closure of *tisis* narratives. In this case, two *tisis* narratives lie in tension with each other. In the first case, Odysseus executes a plot of *tisis* against Polyphemos because he ate his men. But just as Odysseus can enact this narrative and thereby justify blinding Polyphemos, Poseidon can take the same actions and construe them in a different narrative of *tisis*. In the latter case, the blinding becomes the precipitating offense, not, as Odysseus would have it, the act of vengeance. The result is that Homeric *tisis* is unbounded: one *tisis* narrative might incorporate some of the events of another, competing *tisis* narrative while also adding events antecedent or subsequent to the other narrative.

Narratives of vengeance can also remain open-ended in a second way: by leaving significant tensions unresolved or questions unanswered. A prime example of this can be found in the way Demodokos' "Lay of Ares and Aphrodite" (8.234–384) concludes. After Hephaistos has captured Ares and Aphrodite in flagrante delicto and brought the rest of the male gods to his home, he tries to exact from Ares a penalty for adultery (μοιχάρια, 332). This penalty is explicitly described in the language of retributive justice (τίσειν αἵσιμα πάντα, 348; τὰδε τίσω, 356). When Poseidon emphasizes the fullness of the penalty—that it would "all" (πάντα, 348) be paid—he raises the issue of completeness, assuring Hephaistos that this payment will achieve a satisfying resolution to the conflict. The narrative, however, ends inconclusively. Demodokos never explicitly says that Hephaistos receives a payment, only Poseidon's promise to pay if Ares should default (355–56).²⁹ Then Hephaistos releases Ares and Aphrodite, who "immediately spring up" (αὐτίκ' ἀναίξαντε, 361) and flee to their traditional haunts (361–66). If any payment has been made, Demodokos has elided it, and, as Hephaistos recognizes (352), he could not hold Poseidon captive despite whatever promises he has made. Thus Hephaistos' triumph is ambiguous. The lay leaves open the question of whether he actually received the payment and accomplished his *tisis*. Moreover, even if Ares has paid to Hephaistos some kind of penalty, do matters really stand resolved in the end? After all, Hephaistos complained that Aphrodite was "always dishonoring" (αἰὲν ἀτιμάζει, 309) him. If Aphrodite is preternaturally "without self-control" (οὐκ ἐχέθυμος, 320), why should she behave differently now?

Another indication of the second variety of open-endedness that a narrative of vengeance can have is found in the prophecy Teiresias gives Odysseus. First, we should recall that the opening of the poem says that Poseidon will be angry with

29. Alden (2017) 215–16.

Odysseus “until he should reach his homeland” (πάρος ἢν γαῖαν ἰκέσθαι, 1.21). The implication is that Poseidon’s anger will end once Odysseus reaches Ithaca. The language and form of Polyphemos’ curse in Book 9, which would seem to delimit Poseidon’s vengeance against Odysseus, further support this assumption: it ends with Odysseus’ discovering “woes in his home” (ἐν πῆματα οἶκῳ, 9.535)—that is, seeing the suitors ruining his household. But when Odysseus encounters Teiresias in the underworld and learns from him why he is suffering and how it will end, Teiresias repeats the curse almost verbatim, only to continue where Polyphemos ended. He foretells Odysseus’ own revenge upon the suitors (11.116–20) and then tells how Odysseus will have to leave Ithaca again to propitiate Poseidon (121–37). As if to drive the point home to anyone who missed it, Odysseus repeats for Penelope Teiresias’ prediction of future trials on this journey to placate Poseidon’s wrath (23.247–84). Evidently, despite Odysseus’ initial safe return, Poseidon’s vengeance remains incomplete. His *tisis* still menaces Odysseus. And perhaps this should not surprise us, since Poseidon’s anger is described in ways that have it seem to struggle against the limitations that are laid out for it. In the just mentioned passage in the proem, Poseidon is “ceaselessly” angry (ἀσπερχές, 1.20; cf. ἀσκελές αἰεὶ, 1.68), even as his vengeance would seem to terminate with Odysseus’ return to Ithaca (1.21).

When Odysseus tells Penelope of Teiresias’ prophecy, he introduces this future beyond their reunion this way (23.248–50):

ὦ γύναι, οὐ γάρ πω πάντων ἐπὶ πείρατ’ ἀέθλων
ἦλθομεν, ἀλλ’ ἔτ’ ὅπισθεν ἀμέτρητος πόνος ἔσται,
πολλὸς καὶ χαλεπός, τὸν ἐμὲ χρὴ πάντα τελέσαι. 250

*My wife, we have not yet come to the end of all the trials,
but there will still be in the future a measureless toil,
great and difficult, which I must complete in its entirety.* 250

The *πεῖρα* of Odysseus’ story that he here forecasts is rather different from the *πέρας* that Aristarchus and Aristophanes saw a few lines later. Odysseus must hazard another journey inland to found a cult to Poseidon and only then will he have completed his toils. Despite all appearances of peace and resolution at this point in the poem, Odysseus tells Penelope that there is even now only “the hope” that “there will be an escape from evils” (ἐλπωρή . . . κακῶν ὑπάλυξιν ἔσσεσθαι, 287).³⁰ Even if the poem ended at 23.297, it would

30. As Purves (2010) 76 notes, Odysseus’ confession to Penelope “subverts . . . the promise of everlasting reunion.”

still contain this sign of its own incompleteness, undermining the sufficiency of a hypothetical earlier conclusion. The opening of the poem had informed us that, after Odysseus made it back to Ithaca, he will still not “have escaped from trials” (πεφυγμένος ἦεν ἀέθλων) among his own people (1.18–19). In the context of Book 1, this statement most naturally refers to Odysseus’ conflict with the suitors, narrated over Books 13 to 22.³¹ And it would seem to imply that, with their defeat, he would finally be safe and free of all trials. But when Odysseus again refers in Book 23 to his “trials,” it becomes clear that more trouble awaits him. Odysseus must “bring to completion” (τελέσσαι) a “measureless” (ἀμέτρητος) toil. There is something of a paradox here. ἀμέτρητος is a rare word, appearing only one other time in Homer, where Penelope applies it to her “grief” (πένθος) at her plight without Odysseus (19.513). Penelope’s grief is unable to be measured because, as she weeps continually day and night, she cannot see an end to it.³² How, then, can Odysseus bring to an end a labor that has no end? Perhaps Odysseus intends this to be hyperbole, but, no matter what he may mean, the adjective hints that even Odysseus’ supplementary inland journey to placate Poseidon’s vengeful anger may not come to a conclusive end.³³

Even though another book and a half remains in the poem, this journey is not a part of the events of the poem proper. As John Peradotto has pointed out, the syntax of Teiresias’ prediction leaves open whether or not Odysseus will accomplish his mission (11.121–22):

31. The interpretation of these lines is debated. Some (e.g., S. West in Heubeck et al. ad 1.18–19) see here a reference to the trials that Odysseus is experiencing on Ogygia at the moment the gods decide he may return to Ithaca; others (e.g., Stanford ad 1.18–20, Finkelberg [1995b] 7–8) argue for the interpretation that I have given: this is a prolepsis of the events in Books 13 and following.

32. Cf. also Pi. *I.* 1.37, where Asopodoros escapes a shipwreck and is received ἐξ ἀμετρήτας ἀλός (“out of the measureless sea”). The adjective ultimately comes from the noun μέτρον, “measure, limit.” The phrase μέτρα κελεύθου (“measures of the way,” 4.389, 10.539), which in the two places it appears in Homer denotes a journey home, a nostos, carries this same sense of measurable stages that end in a journey’s completion. Heubeck in Heubeck et al. ad 10.539–40 compares μέτρον ὄρμου (“the goal which is the mooring-place,” 13.101).

33. Purves (2010) 76–80 offers another interpretation of Odysseus’ ἀμέτρητος πόνος. She stresses how Odysseus must go beyond the “measured” poetic territory of epic to an end which is beyond the text of the *Odyssey* itself—though she seems to imply that there is still an eventual conclusion available to Odysseus. (Grethlein [2017] 258–59 concurs.) I argue that the conclusion is deferred even farther: it remains open whether Odysseus will ever even finally solve the problem of Poseidon’s anger.

ἔρχεσθαι δὲ ἔπειτα λαβὼν ἐνῆρες ἐρετμόν,
εἰς ὃ κε τοὺς ἀφίκηται οἳ οὐκ ἴσασι θάλασσαν . . .

*Then leave, having taken a well-fitted oar,
until you reach men who do not know the sea . . .*

The “until” clause leaves the outcome uncertain. Will Odysseus find these men ignorant of the sea and found the cult of Poseidon, securing for himself a happy, long life? Or will Poseidon kill him before he can achieve this? Even the fact that Odysseus has to leave the safety of land on Ithaca to journey over the sea (as is, of course, inevitable on any journey from an island) means that the threat of Poseidon’s vengeance has not passed. Even though within the events narrated in the poem proper he escaped the dangers of the sea when the Phaiakians deposited him on Ithaca, the poem contains this open-ended gesture that belies the apparently peaceful conclusion at the poem’s end. The poem could have dealt with the problem of Poseidon’s continued anger directly. Peradotto shows how Odysseus’ mission to found the cult might have easily and logically occurred during his wanderings back to Ithaca.³⁴ The wider Cyclic tradition of myth does treat Odysseus’ journey to found the cult of Poseidon and propitiate his wrath.³⁵ But the poet chose to stress the open-endedness of the poem by both alluding to a second (and not logically necessary) trip while also refraining from narrating it directly.

These are some of the earlier indications of the *Odyssey*’s inconclusiveness, driven by the open-ended nature of narratives of vengeance. In the last two books of the poem, the problems of open-endedness come to the fore. After the consummation of Odysseus’ and Penelope’s reunion, which would seem a satisfactory conclusion to Odysseus’ return and revenge, the poem will not reach its final end until the suitors’ kin demand their own *tisis* from Odysseus and this conflict is resolved. The poet includes this very last conflict and resolution in

34. Peradotto (1990) 59–93. On the “until” clause, see 69–73. On the inland journey occurring during the events of the poem, see 75–77. To take Peradotto’s insight further, I note that completing an *ἄεθλος*, like founding a cult, is very often in myth a condition for the successful achievement of a goal, not something that can be postponed until after the hero reaches his goal. The funeral of Elpenor might be a reflection of this *ἄεθλος*. Elpenor’s *ψυχή* meets Odysseus in Hades and asks him to perform funeral rites for his body, including fixing an oar upon his burial mound (11.51–80). The reason Elpenor gives to Odysseus for why he ought to do this is “so that I might not become a source of the gods’ anger against you” (*μή τοί τι θεῶν μήνυμα γένωμαι*, 73). Thus, Elpenor’s funeral, with its oar set as sign and its function of propitiating (potential) divine anger, has several similarities with Odysseus’ eventual inland mission.

35. Procl. *Chrestom.* 306–30. Though the later summaries we possess were influenced by the *Odyssey*, Ballabriga (1989) observes that Teiresias’ prophecy presupposes that these traditions, in some form, already existed.

order to deal with the unresolved tensions inherent in the ideology of *tisis* itself. Odysseus' monumental *tisis* narrative becomes, in the final scenes, an emblem for the tensions of the system of retribution. Although the agents and narrators of any *tisis* narrative strive to make it finite and conclusive, it remains open-ended, frustrating the desire for finality and ultimate moral meaning. The *Odyssey* continues after Odysseus' triumph over the suitors in order to articulate a subversive vision of *tisis* that questions its conclusiveness.

6.4 *Vengeance Without End?*

In the final conflict in the poem, the poet presents action that, on the one hand, underscores the inevitability of further strife under a regime of *tisis*. Vengeance flows from vengeance, a cycle seemingly without end. On the other hand, the poem terminates in an absolute peace, in which there is no hint of further strife on Ithaca. This final settlement is radically disconnected from the logic of the narrative and made possible only through supernatural intervention. The end of the poem, therefore, points toward its own artificiality and the impossibility of any simple resolution to the strife of *tisis*.

In order to illustrate how radical a departure from the inherent narrative logic of the *Odyssey* the ending we have is, it is worth considering an alternative conclusion to Odysseus' triumph over the suitors, found in the wider mythic tradition. Plutarch preserves one version in a discussion of who the "Coliadae" of Ithaca are and the meaning of *φάγιλος* (*Quaest. Graec.* 14, 294c12–d6):

τῷ Ὀδυσσεὶ μετὰ τὴν μνηστηροφονίαν οἱ ἐπιτῆδαιοι τῶν τεθνηκότων ἐπανάστησαν, μεταπεμφθεὶς δ' ὑπ' ἀμφοτέρων διαιτητῆς Νεοπτολέμος ἐδικαίωσε τὸν μὲν Ὀδυσσεά μεταναστῆναι καὶ φεύγειν ἐκ τῆς Κεφαλληνίας καὶ Ζακύνθου καὶ Ἰθάκης ἐφ' αἵματι, τοὺς δὲ τῶν μνηστήρων ἐταίρους καὶ οἰκείους ἀποφέρειν ποινὴν Ὀδυσσεὶ τῶν εἰς τὸν οἶκον ἀδικημάτων καθ' ἕκαστον ἐνιαυτόν. αὐτὸς μὲν οὖν εἰς Ἰταλίαν μετέστη· τὴν δὲ ποινὴν τῷ υἱεὶ καθιερώσας ἀποφέρειν ἐκέλευσε τοὺς Ἰθακησίους...

After the slaughter of the suitors, the friends of the dead revolted against Odysseus. Neoptolemos, having been summoned by both parties to act as arbiter, judged that Odysseus should leave and go into exile from Cephallenia, Zacynthus, and Ithaca on account of blood, while the companions and kin of the suitors should pay a penalty to Odysseus each year for the crimes committed against his household. Odysseus then left for Italy, but, having dedicated the penalty to his son, he ordered the Ithacans to pay it to him...

The very last lines of the *Epitome* of pseudo-Apollodorus preserve another version of this story (7.40):

εἰσὶ δὲ οἱ λέγοντες ἐγκαλούμενον Ὀδυσσέα ὑπὸ τῶν οἰκείων ὑπὲρ τῶν ἀπολωλότων **δικαστὴν** Νεοπτόλεμον λαβεῖν τὸν βασιλεύοντα τῶν κατὰ τὴν Ἑπειρον νήσων, τοῦτον δέ, νομίσαντα ἐκποδὼν Ὀδυσσέως γενομένου Κεφαλληνίαν καθέξειν, κατακρῖναι φυγὴν αὐτοῦ, Ὀδυσσέα δὲ εἰς Αἰτωλίαν πρὸς Θόαντα τὸν Ἀνδραίμονος παραγενόμενον τὴν τούτου θυγατέρα γῆμαι, καὶ καταλιπόντα παῖδα Λεοντοφόνον ἐκ ταύτης γηραιὸν τελευτῆσαι.

And there are some who say that Odysseus, having been accused by the kin on behalf of those who died, retained as arbitrator Neoptolemos, the king of the islands by Epirus. This man, having expected that with Odysseus out of the way he would gain rule over Cephallenia, sentenced him to exile. Then Odysseus, having traveled to Aetolia, to Thoas, the son of Andraimon, married his daughter and died an old man, having left behind a son by her, Leontophonos.

Both Plutarch and pseudo-Apollodorus tell how, as in the *Odyssey*, the kin of the suitors rise up against Odysseus in order to exact revenge. But the conflict resolves differently in these sources. Either Odysseus alone (according to pseudo-Apollodorus) or Odysseus and the suitors' kin together (according to Plutarch) appoint Neoptolemos as "arbitrator" (*δικαστήν*). According to pseudo-Apollodorus, Neoptolemos was not disinterested. He wanted to gain possession of Cephallenia and therefore banished Odysseus, who then fled to Aetolia to live out the remainder of his days, presumably leaving Ithaca to Telemachos. Plutarch agrees that Neoptolemos exiled Odysseus, though not with any ulterior design, rather "on account of blood" (*ἐφ' αἵματι*). Plutarch continues that Neoptolemos also required the suitors' kin to repay Odysseus a penalty (*ποινήν*) for the crimes committed against his household. Odysseus fled to Italy but left Telemachos behind to rule and demanded the kin's penalty be paid to his son. We have here, then, two different versions of a solution to the problem of the need for *tisis* for the suitors: Odysseus faces exile.³⁶

Exile for homicide does appear elsewhere in the *Odyssey*: Odysseus portrays himself in his lying tale to the disguised Athena as a Cretan who has fled his home for fear of retaliation after he killed a man plotting to steal his spoils from Troy

36. Danek ad 24.413–20 concurs that one or both of these alternative endings to the myth of Odysseus' return may have been known to audiences. He argues that the rather hasty funeral

(13.256–86); Theoklymenos supplicates Telemachos in Sparta, telling him he has fled the kin of a man he killed, and desires passage to Ithaca (15.271–78). Even Odysseus wonders about the possibility that he might have to flee if he is successful at killing the suitors.³⁷ He asks Athena how he could defeat the full band of suitors by himself. He follows with this question (20.41–43):

πρὸς δ' ἔτι καὶ τόδε μείζον ἐνὶ φρεσὶ μερμηρίζω·
 εἴ περ γὰρ κτείναιμι Διὸς τε σέθεν τε ἔκητι,
 πῇ κεν ὑπεκπροφύγοιμι; τὰ σε φράζεσθαι ἄνωγα.

*In addition, I ponder in my mind also this greater thing.
 Even if I should kill them by the will of Zeus and yourself,
 where would I flee? I urge you to consider these things.*

Athena does not answer his second question. She instead promises to fight with him and tells Odysseus that even if “fifty armed bands of mortal men” (πεντήκοντα λόχοι μερόπων ἀνθρώπων, 49) stood against them, they would still succeed. She thus promises victory not only over the suitors, a mere 108 men, but also over even a far greater force.³⁸ No force of retaliation could succeed against them. Athena is thus already repudiating any outcome of the poem that would have Odysseus go into exile. This is the first indication of the radical closure to come at the end of Book 24.

Before the poet introduces this radical ending, in a symmetrical inversion of Odysseus’ *tisis* against the suitors, a final instance of *tisis* arises. At the end of Odysseus’ reunion with Laertes, Odysseus, Laertes, Dolios, and Dolios’ sons enjoy a feast at Laertes’ farm (24.411); meanwhile, the suitors’ kin grieve outside over their loss and plot their revenge (412–38). This is an inversion of Odysseus’ plot of *tisis*, in which the suitors occupied the halls with their feast, while Odysseus schemed to gain entry and revenge. Inversion becomes repetition, as Eupheithes, father of Antinoös, summons an assembly of the Ithacans, which corresponds in several aspects of its structure to the assembly in Book 2 that Telemachos summons in order to pursue vengeance against the

for the suitors (on which see also West [2014] 303, citing earlier scholarship) was better integrated into the plot in an alternative version in which Odysseus goes into exile: the funeral would have provided opportunity to flee.

37. Also cf. 24.430–37, where Eupheithes worries that Odysseus would flee Ithaca before they can exact their vengeance; 23.117–22, on which see p. 213 later. On a killer’s flight in fear of vengeance and thus exile as an outcome for homicide, see Gagarin (1981) 5–11.

38. If a *λόχος* was about 20 men (cf. Aigisthos’ ambush: 4.530–31), then 50 such bands would be about 1000 men, nearly 10 times the number of suitors.

suitors.³⁹ As mentioned in the introduction, Eupheithes' speech (24.422–38) echoes Aigyptios' (2.15–34). In addition, in both assemblies, Halitherses warns of the impending danger to the Ithacans if they assault Odysseus' household. Several verbal and thematic echoes link the speeches. Halitherses is introduced with very similar language. (Three lines of 2.157–61 repeat verbatim in 24.451–54; 2.158 is quite similar to 24.252.) To his earlier warning that Odysseus was going to kill the suitors (2.165), he appended an injunction to the other Ithacans to “restrain” (καταπαύσομεν, 168) the suitors. He begins his later speech with this idea: “your wickedness” (ὑμετέρη κακότητι, 24.455), he tells the kin of the slain suitors, brought about this evil end; you failed to “restrain” (καταπαυέμεν, 457) your sons. Halitherses had even foretold in the earlier speech that Odysseus would be “an evil also to many others” (πολέσιν δὲ καὶ ἄλλοισιν κακόν, 2.166) who live on Ithaca—a vague prophecy, but one that hints at the open-endedness of Odysseus' *tisis*. When in the later speech he reiterates that warning of “evil” (κακόν, 24.462) that would come upon the Ithacans who would attempt revenge against Odysseus, it becomes clear that already in Book 2 he had predicted the consequences of the suitors' continued assault on Odysseus' household. The consequences of Odysseus' return and the suitors' deaths entail the failed vengeance of the suitors' kin. Halitherses saw how Odysseus' revenge extends beyond his immediate goals, implicating a further narrative of vengeance.

The poet gives this natural, open-ended tendency of *tisis* particular emphasis in this case. Odysseus had recognized the gravity of their situation in the immediate aftermath of the slaughter of the suitors. If, Odysseus worries, a man has to flee retaliation for killing just one of his own countrymen, one who has few “helpers” (ἀοσσητῆρες), then how much more will they, who have killed “the bulwark of the city, the best by far of the young men in Ithaca” (ἔρμα πόλῃος ἀπέκταμεν, οἳ μέγ' ἄριστοι κούρων εἰν Ἰθάκῃ), need to flee from the numerous kin of the suitors (23.117–22)? The way Odysseus describes the suitors here places him in a complicated ethical position: the only other instance in Homer where one character is described as a “helper” when taking vengeance is when Achilles, boasting over Hektor, refers to himself as a “helper” for Patroklos (*Il.* 22.333). Still more striking, the only other use of the phrase ἔρμα πόλῃος occurs in the *Iliad* in reference to Sarpedon, just after he has died (16.549). Odysseus recognizes the way the suitors' kin might adopt an Iliadic perspective of an avenging warrior.

The narrative character of *tisis* comes into sharp focus. Odysseus had tried to keep the “report” (κλέος, *Od.* 23.137) of the slaughter from spreading through the city. Soon he concludes it inevitably will go forth (362–63). And as the final scene opens, this process becomes personified: “Rumor” (*Ῥοσσα*, 24.413) spreads through the city

39. Heubeck (1954) 39, Heubeck et al., ad 24.413–548, Grethlein (2017) 213, 251–52.

and “tells of the hateful death and doom of the suitors” (στυγερὸν θάνατον καὶ κῆρ’ ἐνέπουσα, 414). *tisis* takes on a life of its own, as this uncontrollable news itself tells a narrative. (The verb ἐνέπω in several key places signals the performance of a narrative.⁴⁰) The demand for revenge, articulated as a *tisis* narrative, is the inevitable result of the violence of Odysseus’ *tisis*. In a similar way, mourning gives rise to demands for revenge. When the suitors’ kin perform a funeral, the action corresponds with the final scene of the *Iliad*, which portrays a funeral procession for the defeated enemy Hektor. Although the *Iliad* ends without an explicit call for vengeance upon Achilles, he will soon die before the walls of Troy; Odysseus, though facing the clear threat of revenge after his enemy’s funeral, will survive. From the grief of the funeral, Eupheithes convenes an assembly and insists the kin of the suitors “take revenge on the killers of our sons and brothers” (παίδων τε κασιγνήτων τε φονῆας τισόμεθ’, 24.434–35). He persuades the better part of the assembled Ithacans to launch a retributive attack on Odysseus. And so they march off to battle. Eupheithes is at their head, “thinking he would avenge the slaughter of his son” (φῆ δ’ ὅ γε τείσεσθαι παιδὸς φόνον, 470). But, like those who died on the Trojan expedition, he would not return (470–71).

The suitors’ kin are thus engaged in their own *tisis* narrative, though it will end up incomplete. It can be represented using the diagram from chapter 2 (see table 6.1):

Table 6.1 The Suitors’ Kin-Odysseus *tisis* Sequence

Order	Event/State	
	Suitors’ kin’s <i>tisis</i> Sequence	Generic <i>tisis</i> Sequence
1	(Suitors leave their homes?)	Background conditions: master is absent.
2	(Possibility of retaliation raised?)	Unheeded warning: grounds for ἀτασθαλία.
3	Odysseus plots how to kill suitors.	Plotting and preparation I: for the precipitating offense.
4	Odysseus kills suitors.	Precipitating offense.
5	Eupheithes assembles, persuades, and arms allies.	Plotting and preparation II: for the retributive act.
6	Kin try (and fail) to kill Odysseus.	Retributive act.
7	Settlement is made on Odysseus’ terms.	New conditions: former order is restored.

40. Cf. 1.1, 9.19–20.

This diagram reveals that actions that constituted elements of Odysseus' prior *tisis* narrative against the suitors can be reinterpreted by a different party as constituting different elements. Stages three and four of the *tisis* of the suitors' kin were stages five and six of Odysseus' *tisis*. This illustrates how ethical narratives are constructed by interested narrators, who sometimes use the same events but put them in different places in a narrative, thus giving them different meaning. (We saw a similar contest of narratives in the Cyclops' cave.) Stages one and two are not filled out in the poem. But there are events that might be considered to approximate the function of these stages, which I have included in parentheses. First, the suitors did leave their homes in order to woo Penelope and so made themselves vulnerable to Odysseus' attack. Second, Odysseus never received a warning against attacking, nor would we expect one, since he was successful and did not suffer revenge from the allies of his victims. In place of a warning, we have a few brief allusions to the threat of vengeance from the suitors' kin. Shortly before the bow contest, Odysseus worries about this possibility (20.41–43). But Athena dismisses it out of hand (44–53). After the slaughter, Odysseus takes precautions against this threat (23.111–41).

This is the only example in the poem of a failed *tisis* narrative. Even Poseidon's vengeance against Odysseus does not fail entirely, since he does delay Odysseus' return and bring increased woes. But the suitors' kin fail completely. A failed *tisis* has a modified form of a standard *tisis* narrative: there are no ἀτασθαλῖαι; stages six and seven diverge from the standard form. Since there is no reciproca-tion achieved at stage six, there is no new equilibrium established. Stage seven is thus not a return to a previous order, but the confirmation of a new one created after the precipitating offense. Thus, the suitors die "unavenged" (νήπινοί, 1.380, 2.145)—that is, without a balancing transaction of requital—and Odysseus lives on in a state of surplus honor. (Of course, this is only the perspective of the suitors' kin. Odysseus believes he achieves a proper new equilibrium after his own vengeance.) Stages six and seven of the suitors' kin's failed narrative occupy the same temporal moments as in a successful narrative, only the results of the events in each are inverted. The kin's representative, Eupheithes, dies instead of Odysseus; a settlement happens after the battle, but on Odysseus' terms.

This failed *tisis* narrative also exhibits the aspects of ideology typical for negative reciprocity. It has the aspect of symmetry. Eupheithes seeks requital for the "slaughter" (φόνον, 24.470) of his son in a battle. He aims to slaughter Odysseus and his allies in a second battle in a commensurate reciproca-tion. This *tisis* has the aspect of synchrony. For Eupheithes, this requital must be immediate. He fears living on in perpetual condition where they are objects of ridicule: "we will be disgraced forever" (κατηφέες ἐσσόμεθ' αἰεὶ, 432); "even men to come" (καὶ ἐσσομένοισι, 433) will learn of the outrage, unless they take vengeance. And their vengeance must happen now, for otherwise, he thinks, Odysseus will escape.

Lastly and most prominently, the role of the agent of vengeance and the absence of a neutral arbiter are important. Eupheithes constructs a narrative of vengeance, and, though he faces opposition and contrary interpretations from Medon and Halitherses, he manages to convince a sizable force that he has the right of it.

The preparations for fighting by both Eupheithes' side and Odysseus' have Iliadic overtones: both sides arm, encourage themselves, and assemble before the city. A new war threatens, but this time, unlike at Troy, it will be internecine. As tension mounts, the scene moves to Olympus (24.472–86):

αὐτὰρ Ἀθηναίη Ζῆνα Κρονίωνα προσηύδα·
 “ὦ πάτερ ἡμέτερε Κρονίδη, ὕπατε κρειόντων,
 εἰπέ μοι εἰρομένη· τί νύ τοι νόος ἔνδοθι κεύθει;
 ἢ προτέρω πόλεμόν τε κακὸν καὶ φύλοπιν αἰνῆν 475
 τεύξεις, ἢ φιλότητα μετ’ ἀμφοτέροισι τίθησθα;”
 τὴν δ’ ἀπαμειβόμενος προσέφη νεφεληγερέτα Ζεὺς·
 “τέκνον ἐμόν, τί με ταῦτα διείρειαι ἡδὲ μεταλλάς;
 οὐ γὰρ δὴ τοῦτον μὲν ἐβούλευσας νόον αὐτῇ,
 ὥς ἢ τοι κείνους Ὀδυσσεὺς ἀποτείσεται ἐλθών; 480
 ἔρξον ὅπως ἐθέλεις· ἐρέω δέ τοι ὥς ἐπέοικεν.
 ἐπεὶ δὴ μνηστῆρας ἐτείσατο δῖος Ὀδυσσεύς,
 ὅρκια πιστὰ ταμόντες ὁ μὲν βασιλευέτω αἰεὶ,
 ἡμεῖς δ’ αὖ παίδων τε κασιγνήτων τε φόνοιο
 ἔκκλησιν θέωμεν· τοὶ δ’ ἀλλήλους φιλέοντων 485
 ὥς τὸ πάρος, πλοῦτος δὲ καὶ εἰρήνη ἄλις ἔστω.”

But Athena addressed Zeus, son of Kronos:

*“Our father, son of Kronos, highest of rulers,
 tell me when I ask you, what now does your mind hide within?
 Are you going to make further evil war and terrible din of battle, 475
 or will you establish friendship between both sides?”*

Answering her, cloud-gathering Zeus spoke:

*“My child, why do you ask and question me about these things?
 For did you not yourself devise this plan,
 that Odysseus would come and take vengeance on those men? 480
 Do as you wish, but I will tell you what is fitting.
 Since noble Odysseus took vengeance on the suitors,
 having made sure oaths, let him rule forever,
 and let us, in turn, establish a forgetting of the slaying
 of their sons and brothers. And let them love one another 485
 as before, and let there be wealth and peace in abundance.”*

Athena is concerned about the threat to her favorite, Odysseus. But even more pressing are the effects of what amounts to civil war on Ithaca. In order for Odysseus to have his foretold happy life as ruler on Ithaca, his community must be whole and at peace. The final prediction of Teiresias' prophecy makes this plain: "around you, your people will be blessed" (ἀμφὶ δὲ λαοὶ ὀλβιοὶ ἔσσονται, 11.136–37; cf. 23.283–84).⁴¹ At issue at this juncture in the plot is how this happy end will come about. But with the present crisis, the poem is headed to an end in war.

According to Athena, whatever end results will come by the will of Zeus. Either he will "make" (τεύξεῖς) war or "establish" (τίθησθα) peace. This pair of alternatives that lie before Zeus reflect the alternative narrative paths available to the poet. When Zeus chooses how to resolve the conflict on Ithaca, he also sets the course for how the poem will end.⁴² Having already rejected an untroubled conclusion of Penelope's and Odysseus' reunion, the poet is once again rejecting any simple ending that resolves the tensions of *tisis* through compromising measures, such as exile or arbitration, as seen in the traditions about Odysseus preserved in Plutarch and the *Epitome* of pseudo-Apollodorus. Rather, in keeping with the model of a successful nostos, Odysseus must achieve a total victory—in contrast to the partial, tragic success of Achilles in the *Iliad*. Two drastically different paths, then, lie before Zeus and the audience: communal friendship or eradication of opposition through warfare. With Athena's support, there is little doubt how Odysseus would fare in a battle—Medon, recalling the overwhelming effect of a god's assistance to Odysseus in his battle with suitors, has just warned Eupheithes of as much (24.442–50)—but Ithaca would be devastated.

Much as he did in the opening divine council, Zeus repudiates the terms of Athena's question (cf. 1.64). Just as in the earlier scene she accused Zeus of being behind Odysseus' ill fate (1.62), she here implies that Zeus planned a civil war for Ithaca. But also, just as in the earlier scene Zeus countered that Poseidon was the one to blame (1.68–75), he here again puts the blame on another—strikingly, on Athena herself. This war is not what lies in his "mind" (νόος, 24.474), as Athena claimed; rather, Zeus corrects, it is her "plan" (νόον, 479). And the way that Zeus explains the content of her plan is especially revealing: she planned "that Odysseus would indeed come and take vengeance on those men" (480). This is what Athena had in mind from the outset of the poem, which she programmatically

41. Hölscher (1967) 12 considers "the theme of gentle and righteous kingship" the "guiding idea" (*Leitidee*) at the center of the poem's design. Cook (2014) 100 notes "the clear echo" between Teiresias' prediction and Zeus' promise.

42. Danek ad 24.472–88 and 489–548, Marks (2008) 72–78.

announced in the opening council (1.83–95).⁴³ Zeus is claiming that her plot of *tisis* naturally results in the “further warfare” (24.475) she wants to avoid.⁴⁴ The adverb *ποτέρω* is significant: *tisis* produces further *tisis*.

The implications of this claim are momentous. For this sequence of plots—from the suitors’ depredations to Odysseus’ vengeance to the vengeance of the kin of the suitors—presents itself as a new defining model of *tisis*. The previous model of Orestes as alluded to numerous earlier times in the poem made *tisis* seem conclusive and complete (though, as we have seen, the poet had already begun to undermine that model in subtle ways). Now, in the final book of the *Odyssey*, the new model of Odysseus, however, makes *tisis* fraught and open-ended. One plot of *tisis* bleeds into another. This final divine council scene, having similar programmatic weight as the first, grants similar authority to the new model—indeed, superior authority, inasmuch as it revises and corrects the first. And there is no reason to assume that the cycle of *tisis* would end with the kin’s attack. Odysseus has a supernatural guarantee of success from Athena, but absent this, his meager band of youths and old men could easily lose and Odysseus be killed. But in that case another *tisis* would result, as Telemachos or another survivor would doubtless demand requital. Odysseus’ supporters did not accept the narrative that Eupheithes told in the assembly that cast the killing of the suitors as murder (24.422–38). Halitherses condemned the suitors for wasting Odysseus’ home and wooing his wife with “evil recklessness” (*ἀτασθαλίῃσι κακῇσι*, 458). He thus invalidated Eupheithes’ claim to *tisis*. An entire sequence of denials of opponents’ claims to *tisis* leads to a corollary sequence of agents’ claims to their own *tisis*: Eupheithes (and his allies) deny Odysseus’ claim, which leads to his own claim; but Halitherses (and the other supporters of Odysseus) denies Eupheithes’ claim, which would just as surely lead to his own (or another ally’s) claim if Eupheithes succeeded. The whole cycle of vengeance has no natural end, and thus it exerts a centrifugal force on the poem toward open-endedness.

Since there is no natural way out of this cycle of narratives, Athena offers two supernatural solutions. One is warfare (476), but this cannot be any ordinary war. It must end not only in victory (this alone requires supernatural assistance) but also in the annihilation of opposition. After all, the persistence of allies of the slain suitors shows how new dangers will arise from mere victory. In part, Odysseus chose to slaughter indiscriminately all the suitors and all the

43. To be precise, she presents there a dual program: nostos for Odysseus and dealing with the crisis on Ithaca for Telemachos. But as the first book proceeds, it becomes clear that Athena plans for these two programs to combine into a single nostos with *tisis* for Odysseus.

44. Danek ad 24.472–88 and 489–548 argues that warfare “is marked as the ‘natural’ resolution through the broader course of the plot.”

servants who might be sympathetic to their side in order to achieve just such a total victory. Thus silencing all opposing voices with death, he tried to ensure that he would have the last word in his narrative of *tisis*. But even this extreme measure was unsuccessful, since the suitors' kin remained to avenge them. Athena and Zeus could secure a total military victory, but only at the cost of devastating Odysseus' own land and people.

Athena's other solution to the crisis is love and friendship. But after so many deaths, so much grief, and so many calls to vengeance, how could this ending be possible? How could the cycle of vengeance come to an end? Zeus recognizes the inevitable natural consequences of vengeance, but he has a plan to arrest the normal cycle of narratives—amnesia (24.483–86):

... ὅρκια πιστὰ ταμόντες ὁ μὲν βασιλευέτω αἰεΐ,
 ἡμεῖς δ' αὖ παίδων τε κασιγνήτων τε φόνοιο
 ἔκλῃσιν θέωμεν· τοῖ δ' ἀλλήλους φιλεόντων
 ὥς τὸ πάρος, πλοῦτος δὲ καὶ εἰρήνη ἄλις ἔστω. 485

... *having made sure oaths, let him rule forever,*
and let us, in turn, establish a forgetting of the slaying
of their sons and brothers. And let them love one another
as before, and let there be wealth and peace in abundance. 485

Analyzing a few details of Zeus' lines reveals just how radical his solution to the crisis is.

First, Zeus' words echo and correct Eupheithes' call for vengeance from 50 lines earlier (24.433–36):

λώβῃ γὰρ τάδε γ' ἐστὶ καὶ ἐσσομένοισι πυθέσθαι,
 εἰ δὴ μὴ παίδων τε κασιγνήτων τε φονῆας
 τεισόμεθ'. οὐκ ἂν ἐμοί γε μετὰ φρεσὶν ἡδὺ γένοιτο
 ζώμεν, ἀλλὰ τάχιστα θανὼν φθιμένοισι μετεῖην. 435

For these things are an outrage, even for men to come to learn of,
unless indeed we take revenge on the killers of our sons and brothers.
For my part, it would not be pleasant in my heart
to live; rather, would that I swiftly die and be among the dead. 435

Both speakers are addressing the problem of the “slaying/slayers of sons and brothers” (παίδων τε κασιγνήτων τε φονῆας/φόνοιο, 434/484). The slight change Zeus introduces—“slaying” in place of “slayers,” φόνοιο for φονῆας—might be significant. The act of forgetting becomes generalized beyond the concrete acts of specific killers

in the recent past. Now no agent is named, which means Odysseus and his allies may continue to be remembered, even as their actions are forgotten.⁴⁵

Second, the syntax of these lines is peculiar. After the nominative participle *ταμόντες* comes a contrasting *μέν* clause: “having made sure oaths, let him rule forever.” One would then expect the following *δέ* clause to complement the *μέν* clause and describe the other party involved in making the oaths—that is, the kin of the suitors. But a new subject intervenes—the gods: “Let us, in turn, establish a forgetting of the slaying of their sons and brothers.” It would have been more natural for Zeus to say, “and let the kin forget the slaying.” The two parties in the oath are the suitors’ kin and Odysseus (cf. 24.546), and gods never “cut oaths” with mortals. Indeed, this ritual—a Homeric version of a widespread custom in the Near East in which animals are killed in order to solemnize an agreement between parties—has as its underlying logic that the parties call upon the gods to make an oath-breaker suffer the same fate as their sacrificial victims.⁴⁶ To have the gods as a participant in this ritual would be peculiar.⁴⁷ Contrary to our expectations, we get a radical break in syntax.⁴⁸ The gods displace the suitors’ kin in the flow of thought, as if to substitute for them in the settlement with Odysseus. The gods do not actually take an oath with Odysseus, but the syntax subtly evokes this possibility. The suitors’ kin will not willingly make a settlement with Odysseus, therefore divine intervention is required. The radical break in syntax mirrors the radical, in-breaking action of the gods, interrupting the natural path toward

45. One might object that a genitive is now required with *ἐκλῆσιν* and the genitive plural *φονέων* would be unmetrical. The poet, however, could have used the genitive singular *φονῆος* here (cf. *Il.* 9.632). It must be admitted Eupheithes had used the plural *φονῆας*, but elsewhere in his speech Eupheithes mostly refers to Odysseus alone in the singular. The poet could have had Eupheithes refer to Odysseus alone as a single murderer (*φονῆα*) and had Zeus done so as well.

46. See M. L. West (1997) 22–23; Clarke (2001) 333 notes that such a ritual is never enacted in Homer and offers a different interpretation.

47. Cf. *Il.* 3.297–301, where the Trojans and Greeks pronounce a curse upon anyone who breaks their truce, which has been instituted in a ceremony described as “having cut friendship and sure oaths” (*φιλότητα καὶ ὄρκια πιστὰ ταμόντες*, 3.73, 94, 256). See Kitts (2005) 15–16, 88, 156–61; Burkert (1985) 251–52. There is a possible analogy in the covenant ceremony in Genesis 15, in which Yahweh places himself under the same sanction as the other party, Abram. This interpretation, however, is controversial: see Hasel (1981).

48. Stanford *ad loc.* points out the irregularity but does not note its significance. Merry-Riddell-Monro *ad loc.* adduces 12.73 as a parallel, where *μέν* . . . *δέ* signals a distributive apposition. This shows how such a construction ought to work, but does not account for the strangeness of having the gods and not the Ithacans as the other party in the oath. Erbse (1972) 223 n. 147 thinks the construction is “a psychologically understandable anacoluthon” because the idea of the “authoritative agency” of the gods has occurred to Zeus. But the question remains, why does Zeus think of divine agency at this moment? Heubeck in Heubeck et al. *ad* 24.482–85 is on the right track when he briefly remarks the syntax emphasizes “the decisive role of the gods.”

further vengeance. The solution to the problems of *tisis* must involve supernatural intervention and the obliteration of the memory of *tisis*.

Last, and perhaps most important, the expression Zeus uses to announce the forgetting—*ἐκλησιν θέωμεν*—is marked. The comparison with Eupheithes' lines is also revealing on this point: with a parallel enjambment, Zeus substitutes a verbal noun of forgetting—*ἐκλησιν*—for the verb of retribution—*τεισόμεθ'*. The periphrasis with a verbal noun ending in *-σις* is somewhat unusual, though not unparalleled (cf. 1.116, 20.225). One parallel is especially significant: *τίσις ἔσσεται* ("There will be a vengeance," 1.40). With that phrase, Zeus programmatically announced the reigning model of *tisis* in his authoritative opening speech; now, he replaces vengeance with forgetting. Furthermore, this periphrasis emphasizes divine agency. Zeus puts the other injunctions in his proposal either as a participle (*ταμόντες*) or as a third-person imperative (*βασιλευέτω, φιλεόντων, ἔστω*). In contrast, Zeus makes himself and the other gods the subject of a hortatory subjunctive form of *τίθημι*. This form is not equivalent to a third-person imperative that would make the suitors' kin the agents of the action, as if they were to make themselves forget the slaughter, just as Odysseus actively rules over them (*βασιλευέτω*). The semantics of the periphrasis are closer to the active form of the verb *ἐκλανθάνω*, "to cause to forget," used once in the active voice to denote how the Muses made Thamyras forget his ability to play the cithara (*Il.* 2.600). The other Homeric examples of a periphrasis of a verbal noun in *-σις* as the direct object of *τίθημι* support this view. The best parallel is when Telemachos imagines seeing Odysseus return and "make a scattering of the suitors in his halls" (*μνηστήρων τῶν μὲν σκέδασιν κατὰ δώματα θείη*, 1.116; cf. 20.225). The point of this statement is not that the suitors would depart, as if the verbal idea were intransitive, but that Odysseus would disperse them.⁴⁹ The kin of suitors do not so much forget the slaughter as have their memories erased by Zeus.

Furthermore, the word *ἐκλησιν* is a hapax legomenon, not only in Homer but in all extant Greek.⁵⁰ The poet is coining new language to articulate an innovation in

49. See p. 56 n. 13 earlier on the semantics of this line. There is a similar effect in Book 15 of the *Iliad* when the poet describes Zeus' plan for Achilles' return to battle: Zeus "was going to make a driving-back of the Trojans from the ships" (*μέλλε παλίωξιν παρὰ νηῶν θησέμεναι Τρώων*, 15.601). The poet highlights Zeus' active role in bringing about this change in the Trojans' fortune as compared to when Poulydamas, from his own, more limited point of view, describes the same event—the *παλίωξις*—resulting from the Achaeans' efforts (12.71). Earlier in Book 15, Zeus is even more explicit—using the emphatic pronoun *ἐγώ*—that he is the agent: "Ever continually I would make a driving-back from the ships" (*παλίωξιν παρὰ νηῶν αἰὲν ἐγὼ τεύχοιμι διαμπερές*, 15.69–70).

50. The closest parallel is another, essentially synonymous hapax in Pindar: *ἐπίλασις* (*Pyth.* 1.46). There are some similarities of context: a wish that a returning king achieve long-lasting happiness, freed from past cares.

the way to deal with vengeance. This is not simply a pact not to remember, after the fashion of the Athenian amnesty of 403 B.C. That amnesty, and all other historical amnesties in that tradition, worked by having the parties agree “not to recall harms of past things against one another” (μη μνησικακεῖν ἀλλήλοις τῶν γεγενημένων), as Andocides puts it (1.81; cf. Arist. *Ath.* 39.6). Such a resolution relies on the active participation of the agents in the compact, who refuse to bring up past wrongs, though still possessing their memory. In the *Odyssey*, such a solution to the problems of *tisis* is not (or not yet?) possible. Instead, the gods impose amnesia, the obliteration of the memory of vengeance.⁵¹

Only with amnesia will there be “peace and wealth in abundance.” After all, the cause of this latest strife is Eupheithes’ “unforgettable grief for his son” (παιδός . . . ἄλαστον . . . πένθος, 24.423). The adjective ἄλαστος carries both an active and a passive sense. Eupheithes cannot and does not want to forget his son.⁵² This power of memory to threaten a new round of *tisis* can only be broken by the imposition of amnesia. This is a radical conclusion. The object of Eupheithes’ memory is, in the first place, his son—it is a παιδός . . . πένθος. *tisis* flows out of this memory, and thus erasing this grief entails a still greater erasure. At a minimum, the core narrative of the epic—Odysseus’ *tisis* against the suitors—must be forgotten, and, if we carry the implications of the amnesia further, perhaps much more than this must be forgotten.⁵³

51. Loraux (1998) 94 calls this an instance of the “archaic wish” for “oblivion of wrath.” She compares Alc. fr. 70C. Allan (2006) 25, in an otherwise strong defense of the final scene of the poem in terms of social order, elides the crucial role of forgetting. Some critics have seen in Zeus’ speech the inauguration of a new political order that is grounded on state punishment in place of private vendetta, making the end of the *Odyssey* into a proto-*Eumenides*: see Hommel (1955) 242, Erbse (1972) 140. However, such an interpretation undervalues the radicalness of Zeus’ amnesia. The suitors’ kin are not collaborators in their forgetting. See Grethlein (2017) 254, who emphasizes the way in which the conclusion of the poem is a reversion to an old political order before Odysseus left for Troy (see 24.486). However, this political reversion can only happen with the rejection of the regime of *tisis* and so remains a revolutionary event.

52. Loraux (1998) 94, 99–100. Verbal adjectives ending in -τος can be both active and passive: see Chantraine (1933) 306. See also Slatkin (1991) 95–96, Christensen (2019) 144–47. All uses of ἄλαστος in Homer (*Il.* 22.261, 24.105, *Od.* 1.342, 4.108, 14.174, 24.423), as well as in Hesiod (*Th.* 463), the *Hymn to Aphrodite* (207), and Alcman (1.34), carry this sense of unforgettable/un-forgetting (though not necessarily both at the same time, as here). The only partial exception is *Il.* 22.261, where Achilles uses it to describe Hektor. In that instance, it is best to understand it in a transferred sense—“one whose deeds cannot be forgotten [and so must be punished].” The later ἀλάστωρ, often translated as “avenging spirit” or “wretch,” also has both active and passive senses. It seems to have developed from ἄλαστος and from the active/passive meanings of “one who cannot forget [a cause of anger]” and “one whose deed [a cause of anger] cannot be forgotten.”

53. Might forgetting the slaying of the suitors entail forgetting that they ever existed as well? The grief that mobilizes the kin of the suitors arises from the sense of longing for those who

This general amnesia is the last of a series of ambivalent acts of induced forgetting in the *Odyssey*. While journeying home, Odysseus and his companions had encountered the Lotus-Eaters (9.82–104). These men gave Odysseus' scouting party the fruit of the lotus, which caused those who ate it to wish to remain there and "to forget their homecoming" (νόστου τε λαθέθαι, 97). Similarly, when Circe hosted a group of the companions, she gave them food laced with drugs that induced them "to completely forget their native land" (πάγχυ λαθοίατο πατρίδος αἴης, 10.236). A full year later, they remain with Circe because now Odysseus has fallen prey to forgetting. The companions must exhort him: "Remember your native land" (μυμνήσκεο πατρίδος αἴης, 10.472). With both the Lotus-Eaters and Circe, forgetting led to loss of return. Without Odysseus' rescue, these men would have been condemned to remain on these foreign lands indefinitely. The contrast with the final scene is striking, since in these two earlier cases the companions forget Ithaca and would have lost it, whereas in the final scene the Ithacans' forgetting allows for the salvation of Ithaca. A more positive sort of forgetting can be seen in the effects of song, which can cause a listener to forget present troubles and replace them with recollections of famous deeds of heroes and gods. This power of song is made most explicit by Hesiod (*Theog.* 96–103), who speaks of how a singer "brings a forgetting of anguish" (δυσφροσυνέων ἐπιλήθεται, 102) upon a man who is possessed by "grief" (πένθος, 98). This effect is also implied in Homer as well in the many places where song is described as an enchantment.⁵⁴ For instance, Penelope complains of her "unforgettable grief" (πένθος ἄλαστον, 1.342) when Phemios sings of the homecomings of the Achaians. The goal of his song is evidently "enchantment" (θελεκτήρια, 337), which would lead the audience to forget their personal troubles. But for Penelope, unlike the suitors, the subject of the return of heroes from Troy is a personal misery, and so her grief remains. (The same dynamic is apparent when Odysseus weeps at hearing of his own exploits at Troy in the songs of Demodokos [8.531].)

are absent (as grief regularly does in Homer: see Austin [2015]). That "longing for what is missing to be present" (ibid. 150) would not disappear with the memory of the slaughter. The suitors—the object of longing—would still be missing. Zeus does not, as in an autochthony myth, create a new generation of leading young men. There would remain a void in the community that would not have its grief assuaged. And this erasure of the memory of the slaughter of the suitors would not answer the problem of the grief over the Ithacans who never returned from Troy (whom Eupheithes also mentions), unless the *φόνοιο* of 484 covers also their deaths. So must the companions' deaths (and lives?) be forgotten too? Odysseus' expedition to Troy? Perhaps this is to push the interpretation too far. But it would seem there can be no epic of Odysseus' adventures—no *Odyssey*—on Ithaca. This would be consistent with a well-known pattern in the *Odyssey* (see, e.g., Segal [1994] 99), in which a heroic song brings grief to those who are personally concerned with its subject.

54. See Lanata (1963) 8–9, Walsh (1984) *passim*, Ford (1992) 52–53.

A rather more ambiguous forgetting can be found in “the drug . . . that banishes grief and anger and brings forgetfulness of all evils” (φάρμακον . . . νηπενθές τ’ ἄχολόν τε, κακῶν ἐπίληθον ἀπάντων, 4.220–21) that Helen mixes in the wine served out among Menelaos’ guests. Helen is responding to the tears shed by all a moment before at Menelaos’ speech about Odysseus (183–86). She may also be attempting to protect against the acrimony between her and Menelaos that will be revealed in their differing recollections about her role at Troy (233–89).⁵⁵ The effects of Helen’s drug are thus apparently positive: it soothes grief and promotes domestic harmony. But there is a sense of ambivalence in its power as well. It is powerful enough to prevent one from shedding tears, even if one’s own family member is killed before one’s own eyes (222–26)—an indifference that could call into question one’s familial loyalty and identity.⁵⁶ And Helen’s drug might well obscure clear judgments about her morally questionable behavior, just as much as prevent disruption in Menelaos’ household. This ambivalent, induced forgetting foreshadows the general amnesia at the end of the poem. There are verbal parallels: Helen’s drug “causes forgetting” (ἐπίληθον, 221) and “removes grief” (νηπενθές), even over the death of one’s own “dear son” (φίλον υἱόν, 225), much as Zeus’ amnesia will dispel the “unforgettable grief over a son” (παιδός . . . ἄλαστον . . . πένθος, 24.423) that grips the suitors’ kin. But the limits of Helen’s drug are also revealing: though powerful, it is evidently natural and its effects are limited to a single day (ἐφημέριός, 4.223).⁵⁷ In this way, the supernatural power of Zeus’ amnesia, which has no temporal bounds, stands out all the more.

The conclusion to the poem is enacted just as abruptly as the amnesia is instituted. Once Zeus and Athena have made their decision, they interject themselves upon the battle already in its first stages. Athena imposes the gods’ conclusion, with the help of signs from Zeus. But her settlement is arbitrary. She gives no reason to the suitors’ kin why their claims will be ignored. Her settlement is the first *dea ex machina* conclusion in Greek literature. As a divine power, she imposes an arbitrary decision to decide an ultimately irreconcilable dispute. The dispute, and the poem along with it, can come to an end precisely because the

55. On the complexities of the scene, see Olson (1989b) and (1995) 83–86 esp. 83 n. 43 for further bibliography.

56. See Canevaro (2018) 174–81 on the negative side of the power of the φάρμακα of Helen and Circe to induce forgetting.

57. S. West in Heubeck et al. ad 4.220ff. notes the contrast with the magical effects of the lotus and Circe’s drug. She also notes (ad 4.221) the distinctiveness of the diction here. See also Mueller (2007) 355, who comments on the example of Helen: “Forgetting can be pleasurable, she seems to warn, but if taken in too large a dose, also extremely dangerous.”

terms of conclusion are arbitrary. It is a tautological conclusion that cannot be disputed in any rational way.

6.5 Conclusion

Thus the poem ends with this extreme effort to provide closure. This is, in fact, the only *conclusion*, as such, it could have had. For our *Odyssey* has throughout shown that *tisis* breeds endless further plots, making an epic of revenge fatally open-ended. Even the extreme violence of the general, indiscriminate slaughter of the suitors was not enough. To come to an end, the poem needed to obliterate the memory of *tisis* as well. The final scene in the poem tries to impose its conclusion upon eternity, as Odysseus will “reign as ruler forever” (βασιλευέτω αἰεί, 24.483). With Laertes miraculously rejuvenated (24.365–82), Odysseus’ new perpetual reign of peace represents a reversion to an earlier state of affairs, before he left for Troy. Such a conclusion is only possible through divine fiat. The artifice of this ending and its radical disjunction with the rest of the plot are thus integral to the poet’s project and the poem as a whole. The last scene of the *Odyssey* reveals the instability of an epic that ends in revenge.

Though at the close of our *Odyssey* Ithaca would appear idyllic, a final irony underlies this conclusion. For in one respect Zeus and Athena are unsuccessful in their attempt to induce a general forgetting of the slaughter: the event has been immortalized in epic. The mediation of the song allows the poem’s auditors to escape the spell of forgetting. Thus, Euphithes’ fear is realized: his son’s unavenged death has become “a disgrace . . . for future men to hear” (24.432–33). The suitors’ deaths have achieved the greatest memorial of all. At the same time, the poem’s very existence—a product of an act of remembering Odysseus’ slaughter of the suitors—questions the security of the act of forgetting that underlies its own conclusion.

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